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PHOTOGRAPHY
MAGAZINE

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March 2015 • Rs. 150
(Total 160 pages+8 pages Supplement)

INSIDE
AN EXCLUSIVE MAGAZINE ON THE
ART OF CELLPHONE PHOTOGRAPHY

Better Photography

Better Technique. Better Insight. Better Pictures

EXCLUSIVE TESTS

Sony Alpha A7M2

Nikon 1 AW1

Sony DT 35mm f/1.8 SAM

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AWARDS

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rural bus route, three
cameras and a scanner

DIFFERENT WAYS TO ADD A
**DASH OF
HUMOUR**

Explore ideas and perspectives to lend
a funny quotient to your photographs

GREAT MASTERS

The photographic career of
the prolific Stanley Kubrick

CELLPHONE DIARIES

Amit Mehra on the need to be
discerning with one's images

PHOTOFEATURE

Discover the chaos of Lolark
Chatt Puja in Varanasi's lanes

PROFILE

Birthe Piontek's uncanny
photographic explorations

Network **18**

Better Photography

Better Technique. Better Insight. Better Pictures

VOLUME 18 • ISSUE 10 • MARCH 2015



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- Visit <http://betterphotography.in/contests> and register yourself on the website
- Participate in the relevant contests on the page. There will always be a contest open for you to take part in!
- For Reader's Gallery contests, make sure the images have been made using a cellphone
- For Reader's Tip and Your Pictures contests, include a 100-word note on how and why you shot the image
- Winners of all the contests get featured on our website and can be featured in the magazine too. They will also receive special prizes!

Send in a synopsis, with low-resolution images for viewing, to contribute articles to the following sections:

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Published and Printed by Sandeep Khosla on behalf of Network18 Media & Investments Ltd. Editor: K Madhavan Pillai Printed at Indigo Press (India) Pvt. Ltd., Plot # 1 C/716, Off Dadoji Konddeo Cross Road Between Sussex & Retiwalla Indl., Estate, Byculia, Mumbai - 400027, & published at Network 18 Media & Investments Ltd., Empire Complex, 1st Floor, 414, Senapati Bapat Marg, Lower Parel, Mumbai - 400013.

Better Photography is registered with the Registrar of Newspapers of India under No. 69122. Network18 does not take any responsibility for loss or damage incurred or suffered by any subscriber of this magazine as a result of his/her accepting any invitation/offer published in this edition.

* Ownership of this magazine stands transferred from Infomedia18 Limited (Infomedia18) to Network18 Media & Investments Limited (Network18) in pursuance of the scheme of arrangement between Network18 and Infomedia18 and their respective shareholders and creditors, as approved by the Hon'ble High Court of Delhi and the necessary approval of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting is being obtained.

Better Photography

Our ever curious and passionate love affair with the camera will never cease. And so be it as Better Photography, India's first magazine completely devoted to the art and science of photography presents an expansive imagery like no other can. It is also the best-selling photography magazine in India and South Asia.

www.betterphotography.in

EDITORIAL

“In the impersonal melee of getting a picture, a dialogue with the subject, and with oneself, and a critical sense of judgement is often lost.”



The Pros and Cons of Photographic Decadence

With all the choices in digital photography available today, and all the wonderful possibilities it opens up, I often wonder if we are living in an age of enlightenment or decadence. An unlimited number of options, be it in the number of frames that can be shot in a few hours, the high ISO possibilities that make night into day, or the unparalleled level of control over certain minutiae... all of these have let photographers move to another level of thinking. It used to take years for a photographer to learn to make a good exposure, which now can be spent on exploration and learning to make a better image. Just the fact that it is easier for a thoughtful photographer to produce good work, is indeed quite wonderful to behold.

And yet, so many things have been lost in the rush of it all. How many now remember the magical detail and quality of a large format contact printed image? Silver halide is considered unfriendly to the environment now. But what about the massive amounts of e-waste generated by a use-and-discard digital world. A camera would last two generations. Now we consider ourselves lucky if it lasts five years. Despite how delicate photographic gear has become, there is so little concern in maintaining equipment, using it right and being careful. And if a camera just happens to die in a few years... a certain disregard is almost fashionable these days. Newer, faster, more efficient cameras are always just around the corner.

And what about luck? A photograph was all about slowing down, romanticising the work as a form of art on its own, and enjoying the process. Now it is about speeding up and, perhaps, even getting lucky. And in the impersonal melee of getting a picture, a dialogue with the subject, and with oneself, and a critical sense of judgement is often lost.

What seems to be badly lost is a sense of purpose. There was always a powerful reason to make a picture in the not so recent past. The greatest of legends were idealists with a mission. Now, there needs to be no greater purpose to the act of releasing the shutter because the costs associated with it is so little and means nothing.

We need to look back, and reconnect with at least some of the sensibilities of the past to truly be better photographers.

K Madhavan Pillai
editor@betterphotography.in



Another Self Portrait by Stanley Kubrick

The fact that Kubrick was an accomplished photographer is not as well known as his cinematic technique. But this self portrait tells the tale. Perfect edge-to-edge framing without looking into the viewfinder, at a time when there were no 180° tilting LCDs, is rather telling of his prowess with a camera... And so is the 'one point perspective' in this portrait, that he employed brilliantly well in his visually stunning movie scenes.

To know more about Stanley Kubrick's life and thoughts about photography as a powerful medium —
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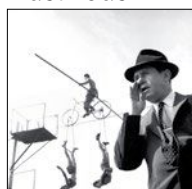


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**INDIA'S BIGGEST WEDDING
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For more details, turn to page no. 38

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Feedback

Send your suggestions, thoughts, and feedback letters to...
feedback@betterphotography.in
Every month, the 'Letter of the Month' will win a special gift from



"I travel frequently because of the nature of my work, but I always make it a point to take some time out and shoot, no matter where I am."



Wonderful World of Macro

When I received my copy of the February 2015 issue of *Better Photography*, I did a double take! It felt as if the moth on the cover jumped out at me and I must say, it is one of the most visually striking covers I have seen from **BP**. Keep them coming!

Mahendra Singh, Chandigarh, via email

Teenagers Need a Chance Too

Today, camera equipment has become affordable. Along with this, there is a sea of tutorials available online. Both these factors have made photography extremely accessible to everyone. I am a photography enthusiast in my teens and I find that many others like me are unable to find an outlet to showcase our work. Especially since we are not formal students of the art, it becomes even more difficult.

While there is no dearth of contests open to amateurs, competing with seasoned professionals can be a daunting task. I request *Better Photography* to have more age-bound contests.

Kartik Khandekar, via email

My Motto This Year

I have been a reader of *Better Photography* for four years and this is the first time that I am writing to you. The Visual Musings section in the December 2014 issue resonated with me deeply, especially Ami Vitale's parting note, "I hope that in your travels, you use your camera not just as

an extension of your eye but also as an extension of your heart." This line has stayed with me and in a way has become my photographic motto for the year.

I travel frequently because of the nature of my work, but I always make it a point to take some time out and shoot, no matter where I am. I find joy in telling simple stories through my photographs and I know that Ami Vitale's advice will serve me as a guiding light.

Arun Sharma, via email

➔ The February 2015 issue of *Better Photography* was centred on macro photography. The cover picture was made by Mark Smith, Daniel Saftner and Annette Evans of macroscopicsolutions.com

Loving Our Rivers

Two stories that were featured in the February 2015 of **BP** really struck home with me. *In Tainted Waters* and *The Decay of a River Culture*, revolved around the state of our rivers. These issues are widely ignored by media and governments alike. While an immediate impact on our collective consciousness is not possible, it is through small steps and attention from magazines like **BP** that will help create awareness. Kudos Team **BP** for featuring them!

Arundhati S, via email

Dazzling Trails

By a stroke of luck, I came across the March 2014 issue of *Better Photography*, which featured light trails that could be made with the use of a tripod. I decided to attempt long exposures and I set off to a high vantage point. From here, I could capture the lights trails left behind by cars. After several tries, I finally made an image that I was happy with. Thank you for the guidance, **BP**!

Pranay Lama, Gangtok, via email

➔ Pranay Lama sent us this image he made of light trails, calling it his best photograph so far this year.



Pranay Lama

How Much is Too Much?

The World Press Photo Awards are respected the world over and are the most highly anticipated photographic event of the year. This is why when I saw the winning photos this year, I was startled to read that 20% of the images in the final round were disqualified on the grounds of excessive and blatant postprocessing. This essentially means that there were several photographs that had intentional additions or subtractions to them. The disqualifications were three times more than last year.

This is a reflection of how common postprocessing has become in our photographic psyche. Today, even a layman is aware of what it involves. Several debates have risen lately about the boundaries of postprocessing. What is right and what is wrong? Where do we place the boundaries? Questions like these were best summed up by Bob Martin, jury member of the World Press Photo Awards, in an interview with the *British Journal of*

Photography. He said, "My view is that if something is added that wasn't there, or something is removed, then clearly that's not correct. But if the contrast is increased, or the corners darkened, or areas are dodged and burned—what then? We used to do all that in the darkroom, and now Photoshop is our darkroom."

I personally believe that postprocessing plays a crucial part in making one's images get closer to how they 'look' in our heads. Most of the time, an image that may be average when shot, looks better after basic editing.

However, organisations like the World Press Photo have to be extra careful in the digital age. It is crucial that press photography accurately presents the events that take place around the world, especially in areas of conflict. Only open discussions and guidelines will pave the way to solve the problem at hand.

Vikas Deshpande, Goa, via email



We believe that the joy of a family photo is in displaying it. To make your special memories stand out, this **Letter of the Month** wins a special Photo Frame from Red Moments!



More on Black & White Please!

I began my journey in photography a few years ago and I have been shooting almost entirely in colour. On the other hand, black and white is a genre that remains almost a mystery to me. While I am in awe of the black and white photographs made by masters like Michael Kenna and Raghu Rai, I find myself unable to think and see in this way. I request **BP** to carry techniques on shooting street photography and portraits in black and white. I am sure there are several people out there like me who would love to know more about it!

Ravi Krishnan, Bengaluru, via email

The Gliding Gharial

I am a conservation biologist, currently working on a project with gharials, a critically endangered species of crocodile. My photography revolves primarily around my work, and I shoot as often as I can if the situation allows it.

The other day, I was standing on a rocky path overlooking the Sone river, watching a male gharial basking near a nesting site.

After a while, he started moving towards something in the river in a smooth motion. Since there was no wind blowing, the water surface remained very still.

Owing to the way I composed my shot, it looked as though he had flown off from the tree! I never find myself short of opportunities to make pictures of this fascinating reptile.

Suyash Katdare, via email

📌 **Suyash Katdare** sent us this image he made of a male gharial at the Son Gharial Sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh.



Suyash Katdare

Better Photography

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SnapShots

WHAT'S NEW

Nikon D810A

The first full frame camera designed for astrophotography, the Nikon D810A uses an IR-cut filter to ensure the camera can capture light emitted by nebulae. It also has additional features for long exposure photography, like a mode that lets you choose shutterspeeds of up to 900sec. The D810A is priced at USD 3799 (approx. Rs. 2.36 lakhs).



Nikon D750 Filmmaker's Kit

Geared at users interested in video filmmaking, this kit includes a D750, 35mm, 50mm, 85mm f/1.8 prime lenses, two Lithium-ion batteries, a stereo microphone, an HDMI cable, and a Ninja 2 video recorder. It will be available for a price of USD 3997 (approx. Rs. 2.5 lakhs).



Sigma dp0 Quattro

The fourth compact in its Quattro lineup, the dp0 uses a fixed 14mm f/4 lens (21mm equivalent), along with the Foveon X3 sensor as seen in its siblings.



Canon PowerShot G3 X

At CP+, Canon showed off a prototype for the G3 X, an enthusiast advanced compact camera with a 1-inch sensor and a 25x zoom (24–600mm equivalent) lens. It is expected to have the same 20MP sensor seen in the Canon PowerShot G7 X, and is WiFi-NFC enabled.



36MP Full Frame Cameras are so 2014!

The megapixel wars were over. The dust settled. Manufacturers like Sony and Nikon settled on a 20MP–24MP standard for a majority of their cameras, with a high resolution option of 36MP. All the while, Canon sat quietly and watched, sticking to sensors around 20MP.

Rumors of a high megapixel camera from Canon has been flooding the internet for some time now. If the company's recent announcement—the EOS 5DS and 5DS R is any indication, the current peace in the megapixel race seems to bore them. They are the first full frame cameras to break the 50MP barrier, with a 50.6MP sensor. The two cameras share the same dynamic as the Nikon D800 and D800E—the 5D S has an AA filter while 5D SR can cancel the effects of the AA filter.

The company has made design and functional changes for better stability and less camera shake, looking to fully utilise the



potential of these 50MP sensors. Most other features in these cameras are derived from what already exist in Canon's current lineup. However, sadly, the cameras stick to Canon's standard of Full HD video at 30fps.

Not satisfied with just a 50MP sensor, Canon displayed a prototype of their ultra high resolution 120MP sensor at CP+, which was announced back in 2010. The surface area of the sensor is in between APS-C and full frame and is intended for video applications. It is capable of a 9.5fps read out by reading multiple pixels simultaneously.

For hobbyists and beginners, the company announced the Canon EOS 750D and the EOS 760D, updates to their APS-C DSLR, the EOS 700D. Both cameras have a 24MP, with an updated version of Canon's Hybrid CMOS AF system. The major difference between the two seems to be more in the design and less in the features. While the cheaper 750D targets beginners, the 760D will be focusing on enthusiasts who want better handling and more control.



“ Tunnel vision can kill creativity. ”

AMI VITALE (1971)

Ami Vitale is a photojournalist, documentary filmmaker and a Nikon ambassador whose adventures have taken her to over 85 countries. Not only has she been witness to calamities, poverty, civil unrest, but also the surreal beauty of the natural world, wildlife and the human spirit. Her photographs have been published in international magazines like *National Geographic*, *Newsweek* and *Time*. These works have garnered numerous awards from organisations like World Press Photos, the Lowell Thomas Awards for Travel Journalism, the Lucie awards, among many others.



www.amivitale.com

WHAT'S NEW

Olympus Air

Similar to Sony's QX-series lens modules, the Olympus Air is a 16MP Micro Four Thirds sensor attached to an MFT lens mount. The module can be clipped to a smartphone, which will act as an LCD. It comes with its own battery and microSD card slot, and an impressive 81-point AF system.



Olympus Updates its Rugged Compacts

Launching the new Stylus Tough TG-860, Olympus has included a 16MP BSI-CMOS sensor, two customisable buttons, WiFi and GPS.



It also retains the 180° tilting LCD. The camera is waterproof (15m), shockproof (2.1m), freezeproof (-10°C) and crushproof (100kg).

Canon's New PowerShot Cameras

The newly announced SX410 IS and the ELPH 350 HS offer a zoom range of 24–960mm and 25–300mm, respectively. The SX410 has a 20MP CCD sensor, 720p video and IS. The more compact ELPH 350 uses a 20.2MP CMOS sensor with built-in WiFi and Full HD video capabilities.

Sigma 24mm f/1.4 DG HSM Art lens

The newest addition to Sigma's Art series lineup is the new wide angle 24mm f/1.4 lens. The lens uses Sigma's 'F' Low Dispersion and Special Low Dispersion elements with 15 elements in 11 groups. The minimum focusing distance is 9.8 inches.

Olympus EE-1

The red dot sight hotshoe attachment from Olympus is meant to aid photographers who are photographing hard-to-track subjects and subjects that are far away. The accessory is extremely useful for extreme telephoto shooting.



A version of this device was first seen in the Olympus Stylus SP-100, a superzoom compact camera, and will now be sold standalone for USD 129 (approx. Rs. 8000).

Pentax AF201FG External Flashgun

This weathersealed external flashgun is designed for Pentax interchangeable lens cameras. It can tilt down to 10° and up to 90°, and has a guide number of 20 at ISO 100. This flash unit is available for USD 149 (approx. Rs. 9300).



Fujifilm XM-FL Body Cap Lens

Fujifilm recently announced the XM-FL, a 24mm f/8 pancake lens designed to look and function like a body cap. The lens also comes with built-in photo filters.



Intimacy Wins the World Press Photo Award

The 58th World Press Photo of the Year award went to Mads Nissen, a Danish photographer, for his portrait of a gay couple sharing an intimate moment in St Petersburg, Russia. The photo was selected from over 97,000 images, submitted by 5692 photographers, from 131 countries.

According to the jury, amongst the hundreds of images of protests, suffering and death that marked 2014, this deeply personal portrait stood out in stark contrast. "It communicates the idea of love between

two people but also talks about hate and human rights abuses that people in the LGBT community face," said Donald Webber, documentary jury chairperson.

The awards also made headlines for disqualifying almost 20% of their entries for being manipulated or carelessly processed. World Press Photo managing director Lars Boering stated, "When alterations meant addition or subtraction in the content of the image, it leads to the images being rejected from the contest."



Mads Nissen

The image is part of a larger project called *Homophobia in Russia*, and also won the Contemporary Issues category.

The Olympus E-M5 Update Can Shoot 40MP Images!

The original OM-D E-M5 was pretty great to begin with—weathersealed, excellent handling, 5-axis IS and a competent 16MP sensor. So how does Olympus plan to outdo itself?

To start with, the new OMD retains these features while including a mode by which its updated sensor can create 40MP images. This is done by using the in-body IS technology to shift the sensor and capture eight images in one second. These are then combined into one high resolution image.

While the company recommends the use of a tripod for this mode, they have also promised that with future versions of the camera, users will be able to create such images handheld. Other features include a 2.36 million dot EVF, WiFi, an articulating

1.04 million dot LCD, a drive mode of 10fps and Full HD at 60fps. The camera will be bundled with a dust and splashproof flash unit—the FL-LM3.

Olympus also announced a revamped M.Zuiko ED 14–150mm (28–300mm equivalent) f/4.0–5.6 II lens, and that the company was developing a new 8mm f/1.8 Fisheye Pro lens.



The Best Imaging Expo of South India is Here!

This year the Photo Expo 2015, will see over a 100 exhibitors from the various imaging manufacturing and service industries from all over India and abroad!

The Photo Expo 2015 is back, bigger and better. Organised by Villart, this expo promises several new attractions this year. Everyone from beginners in photography to serious enthusiasts and professionals have somethings to look forward to. For starters, visitors will be able to attend product launches and interact

with professionals to gain insight into the photography industry today. Along with this, there will be special discounts that visitors will be able to take advantage of.

What to Expect This Year!

To provide a wholesome experience, the Photo Expo is organising seminars conducted in regional languages by

photography experts. Also, there will be workshops on post production, candid photography, external lighting, full HD video editing solutions and business development. Along with these, there will also be a fashion show.

All this is in an effort to bring the photographer and trade and industry professionals together under one roof!



Last year, visitors at the Photo Expo participated in one of the many workshops.

INDIA'S PREMIER EXHIBITION for DIGITAL IMAGING INDUSTRY

PHOTOTM
expo **BROADCAST** **FILM** Expo

When: 18,19 & 20th April, 2015

Where: JRC Conventions & Trade Fairs (Shaikhpet Dargah, Film Nagar) Hyderabad

“ We are very appreciative of the efforts that Mr Ramana and his team have put in. Photo Granth has been exposed to several new visitors across South India and has benefited from the response received for our premium product album Epoca-Italy. ”

Vipul Patel

Managing Director | Photo Granth Pvt Ltd

“ Visiting the Photo Expo last year, we found the fashion show and workshop arrangements to be very impressive. We enjoyed the interaction we had with the visitors and look forward to participating in the Photo Expo this year. ”

Siddartha Majendar

Manager | Kodak India



“ I am very impressed with the Photo Expo and Villart, the organiser who has worked so hard. I received an excellent response from visitors and the photographic trade industry. ”

J.P Soni

Founder & Chairman | Photoquip India Ltd

“ Well known and renowned for many years, the Photo Expo is one of a kind and it is back with domestic and international clients! This year, there will be new products, top clients, seminars, fashion show. We want to touch the heart of the anybody who dreams to be a photographer! So don't miss it! ”

V V Ramana

Founder & Director | Villart



“ The Photo Expo was a treat for anybody who loves photography. Our experience last year was positive, uplifting and educational. Photographers and artists from across the globe were linked together with photography. We cannot wait for this year's event! ”

Sam

Managing Director | Donna Distributors

“ I have been a part of the Photo Expo for the last one decade. I am very happy with Mr Ramana and his team as they make both the visitor's and the exhibitor's experience valuable. We wish him good luck and we are with him where ever Photo Expo is. ”

Viren Satra

Chairman & MD | Monarch Innovative Technologies Pvt Ltd



Organizer:

VILLART

Cell- 9966500010 / 9052020000 / 9885300097

e-mail : info@photoexpo.in / villartexpo@gmail.com / www.photoexpo.in

**7-28 February
Photography
Exhibition**

The Leela Galleria, Chennai



Cop Shiva

Impersonations
Impersonating Enacting Icons is an exhibition of photographs by Cop Shiva. The photos explore the myth and rituals seen in today's society.

**14 February - 6 March
Eye My City**

DLF Cyber City, Gurgaon



Aparna Mohindra

Alliance Française de Delhi will be presenting a selection of works from *Millennium Dreams*, a collaborative project by 11 Indian photographers and two French photographers. The exhibition brings together different artistic interpretations of an ever evolving city.

**25 February - 3 March
Group Photography
Exhibition**

India Habitat Centre, New Delhi
The National Foundation for India will be hosting an exhibition featuring works from three of their 2014 Media Fellows. The photographers whose images are on display are Surrender Solanki, Nikhil Roshan and Ravi Choudhry.

**28 February - 8 March
Fate Breakers
Exhibition**

Galerie Romain Rolland, New Delhi



Pascal Mannaerts

Through the images of Pascal Mannaerts, the exhibition *Fate Breakers: Stories of Outstanding Indian Women* is a portrayal of remarkable Indian women who empower themselves and the lives of others.

PRO TALK

Photomicrography refers to the use of microscopes to capture magnified images of subjects. The term was originally proposed by William H Hamsley, an early pioneer of the use of macro photography.

A Mythical Beast, the Pentax Full Frame Camera...

The long awaited Pentax K-mount full frame camera has been finally announced by parent company Ricoh, and will get a late 2015 release. After many years of waiting, this may be the camera that Pentax users need, nay deserve.

The company seems to be quite serious and has already announced two new lenses, the D FA* 70-200mm f/2.8ED DC AW and

D FA 150-450mm f/4.5-5.6 ED DC AW, designed for full frame cameras. Not much is known about the DSLR, but it is a safe bet that the camera will be weathersealed.



Nikon India Partners with Deepalaya Foundation

Deepalaya Foundation together with Nikon India, will be working on promoting photography not just as a hobby, but as a career for underprivileged women and children. It is an NGO committed to promoting self reliance both in rural and urban areas.

In the first phase of this endeavor, Nikon will be donating a school bus for the Deepalaya School in Gusbethi near

Gurgaon, for children who are deprived of attending a safe and sure means of transport.

Hiroshi Takashina, Managing Director, Nikon India said, "It is recognized that integrating social, environmental and ethical responsibilities into the governance of businesses ensures long term success, competitiveness and sustainability, and we aim at achieving the same by acting as a good corporate citizen."

CALL FOR ENTRIES

InterAction
A UNITED VOICE FOR GLOBAL CHANGE

Our Members | Our Work | Our Resources

2015 InterAction Photo Contest

Each year, InterAction's photography contest focuses on incredible humanitarian and development work.

We encourage you to submit your most powerful photos that illustrate innovative, effective and inspiring efforts in international relief and development. Examples of self-reliance, shared values and partnerships are encouraged, though entries are not limited to those categories. All images should be of work done outside of the United States.

DEADLINE: March 13, 2015

Prizes
One Grand Prize Winner will receive \$200 and the opportunity to accept the Effective Assistance Photography Certificate at InterAction's 2015 Forum, June 22-24.
Three Runners Up will receive \$100 each. All winning photographs will be displayed in an online gallery on www.interaction.org.

Contest Rules:

➔ The contest is looking for exemplary images of self reliance, international relief and development.

2015 InterAction Photo Contest

The Competition: The InterAction Photo Contest focuses on incredible humanitarian and development work. Participants are encouraged to submit images of innovative, effective and inspiring efforts in international relief and development.

Theme: Humanitarian Efforts

Prizes: The grand prize winner will receive USD 200 (approx. Rs. 12,400). Three runners-up will receive USD100 (approx. Rs. 6200) each.

Website: www.interaction.org

Deadline: 13 March

Climate: State of Emergency

The Competition: Organised by Alliance Française, the contest invites photographers to interpret the theme in two images.

Theme: Climate Change.

Prizes: A trip to Paris.

Website: www.bombay.afindia.org

Deadline: 30 April

The Alfred Fried Photography Award

The Competition: The contest aims to present human efforts to live together in peace and the quest for beauty and goodness in our lives. Images can be uploaded either as individual images or as a series.

Theme: Peace

Prizes: The overall winner (Peace Image of the Year) will receive a cash prize of 5000 euros (approx. Rs. 4.8 lakhs). Also, the top five photographers will be invited to attend the awards ceremony in Vienna, and will be awarded the Alfred Fried Peace Medal.

Website: www.friedaward.com

Deadline: 17 May

Hasselblad Masters 2016

The Competition: This competition targets professional photographers with more than three years of experience. Ten outstanding photographers the world over will win the title of 'Hasselblad Master' for 2016.

Categories: Art, Landscape/Nature, Wedding, Portrait, Fashion/Beauty, Products, Architecture, Wildlife, Project//21 and Street/Urban.

Prizes: Each winner will receive a brand new high-end medium format Hasselblad camera.

Website: www.hasselblad.com/inspiration/masters/masters-2016

Deadline: 21 May

28 February – 8 March Full Stop Weekend Festival 2015

DLF Club, Gurgaon

Over the weekend, the festival will play host to talks and discussions by veteran photographers. Visitors can also learn from equipment demos and live stage shoots across various genres. Works of photographers like Idris Ahmed and Neeraj Mahajan will be on display too.

28 February–8 March Sufi Musafir Photography

Cosmic Heart Gallery, Mumbai



Salman Chishty

Photographer Syed Salman Chishty will be launching his work *Sufi Musafir Photography—Journey to Iran Zameen* at the *Building Bridges of Love* exhibition.

1 March Photography Workshop

Bombay Connect, Mumbai

The Master Your DSLR Camera F.A.S.T. workshop by Girish Menon, is a foundation course in photography. The workshop aims to teach attendees on how to use their cameras in the Manual mode. Camera settings based on the subject, lighting conditions and desired outcome will be discussed in this one-day course.

25 March–7 April Time Out

Arpana Caur Gallery, New Delhi



Shoba Jolly

Time Out is a photo art exhibition by Ravi Dingra, Moushume K Jha, Shoba Jolly and Ahmed Firoz. It portrays the myriad facets of life through a celebration of the small things. The exhibition is a play on the idea—take time out for leisure.

PRO TALK

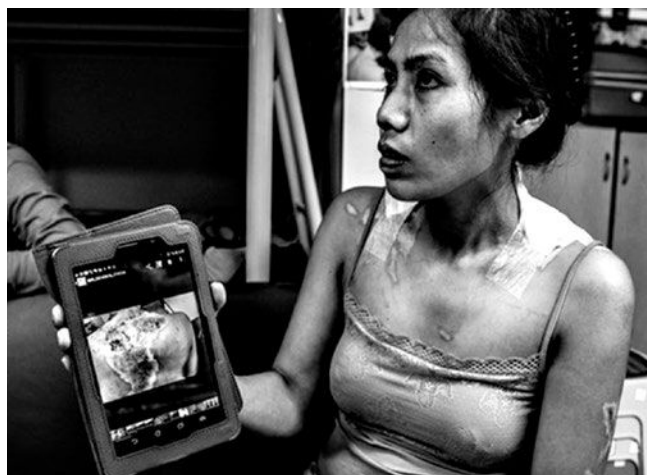
XMP file stands for Extensible Metadata Platform. These files store metadata information across multiple image file formats. It is used in softwares like Photoshop, to remember edits made to RAW files.

Domestic Help, Photographer, Magnum Fellow

Xyza Cruz Bacani, 27, worked for a wealthy Chinese family and photographed the streets of Hong Kong on her days off. This month, she became the recipient of Magnum's 2015 Human Rights Fellowship.

The Photography and Human Rights program provides photographers with scholarships and intensive training in the ethical use of photography, in the advancement of human rights at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts in New York City. The courses are taught by Magnum-associated photographer Susan Meiselas and Tisch professor Fred Ritchin.

The Fellowship was also awarded to Muyi Xiao, Nour Kelze, Anastasia Vlasova, Basel Alyazouri, Sipho Mpongo and Chery Dieu Nalio. It aims to provide a platform to young photographers who are committed to advancing human rights in their home countries.



Xyza Cruz Bacani

Xyza spent her days off documenting a women's shelter for abused domestic workers.

THE MONTH THAT WAS

Photos from Angkor Wat's Temples

A photo exhibition on the world heritage temples of Angkor Wat, showcased 50 prints that depict the architectural marvel of these constructions. The exhibit was held at the Visual Art Gallery, India Habitat Centre in New Delhi, from 21–24 January, and was put together and presented by IPS officer Somesh Goyal.

Sachin: A Lens Story

The exhibition, *Sachin: A Lens Story*, features 60 images that capture emotional and profound moments from Sachin Tendulkar's cricket career. The photographs were made by RS Gopan, Chief Photographer of

Malayala Manorama, and were on display from 20–24 January at the Central Stadium, Thiruvananthapuram. As a press photographer, Gopan has photographed thousands of images during Tendulkar's 14-year career.

The Confluence

The exhibition explored the beauty of the unexplored caves of Meghalaya and their ecological importance. The photographs that explored cave formations, made by Shivakumar L and Sriharsha Ganjam, were on display at the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) in Bengaluru, on 1 February.

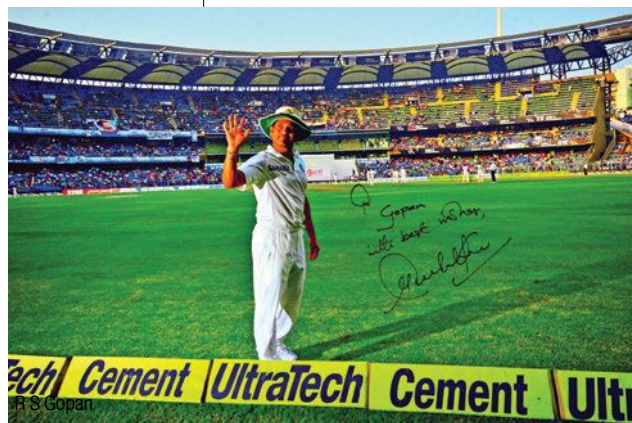
Anand Van

The magic of Varanasi was captured and displayed in the exhibit *Anand Van*, by lawyer and photographer Vivek Srivastava. It was held at the Faculty of Visual Arts, Benaras Hindu University in Varanasi, and was inaugurated by Justice Girdhar Malviya.

Inner and Outer Lives

The Alkazi Foundation for the Arts put together a photo exhibition of the works of Homai Vyarawalla, India's first woman photojournalist, called *Inner and Outer Lives: The Many Worlds of Homai Vyarawalla*.

Curated by Sabeena Gadhihoke, the works featured are from the late 1930s to the early 60s, and focuses on women's education and professional skills, newly emerging technologies and vignettes of the urban everyday in Bombay. The exhibit was on display from 8–21 February at the Shridharani Gallery in New Delhi.



RS Gopan

LensCulture Exposure Awards Winners Announced

Danila Tkachenko won the LensCulture Exposure Awards for best series, while Raina Stinson won first place in the Single Image category. Danila's series *Restricted Areas* look at giant snow covered structures that once defined the Soviet era but now lay in ruins. On the other hand, Raina's winning image is from her series *Millennial Revolution*.

These awards were launched to discover and showcase the best works from photographers to look out for, on a

global scale. This edition of the awards saw photographs submitted from across 118 countries, out of which 31 photographers were selected as finalists.

In the *Series* category Ioana Cirlig from Romania and Franky Verdickt from Belgium won the second and third place respectively. In the *Single Image* category, Marcin Ryzek from Poland and Pierre Terdjman from France won. You can check out the other finalists here, www.lensculture.com/2014-lensculture-exposure-award-winners



Danila Tkachenko



Raina Stinson

Google Acquires Odysee, a Photo Backup App

Odysee, an iOS and Android app created by Nimbuz Inc, which was working on smartphone software for backing up and sharing photos and videos, has been acquired by Google. By automatically sending backups to computers, the app could free up space on a user's phone without needing to sign up to a cloud-based storage system. It also allowed private and automatic sharing with other users as well. However, the app is no longer available as a standalone on either iTunes or the Google Play store. Once Odysee stops backup operations on February 23, all photos and videos already passed through the service will be available as a downloadable archive. "Odysee's vision was to be the easiest way for everyone to capture unlimited memories and access them everywhere," the team writes. "We are very excited to join Google where we'll continue to focus on building amazing products that people love."

The Odysee's Platform team will become a part of Google+. Also, rumours have been around about Google planning to spin off Photos into an app separate from Google+. Whether Odysee will be integrated into that remains to be seen.

Forgotten Camera Found In Neil Armstrong's Closet

Previously undiscovered, a bag kept by Neil Armstrong was found by his widow, who gave its contents to the National Air and Space Museum, USA. Amongst the trinkets was a 16mm Data Acquisition Camera that documented

the landing and the astronaut's first steps on the Moon, on 20 July 1969. "As far as we know, Neil never discussed the existence of the items and no one else has seen them in the 45 years since his return from the Moon," wrote museum curator Allan Needell.



Dane Penland

BOOK REVIEW

Title: Cuba: Island at a Crossroads
Authors: David Alan Harvey and Elizabeth Newhouse
ISBN: 978-0792275015
Publisher: National Geographic
Price: USD 157 (approx. Rs. 9800)

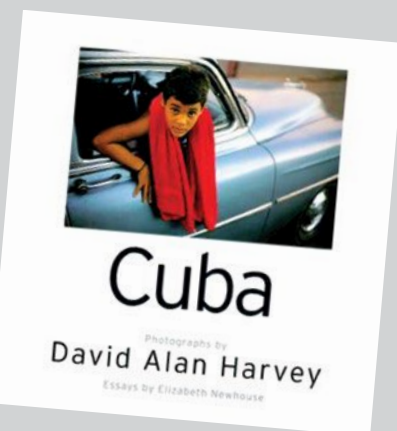
Cuba: Island at a Crossroad

There is currently great enthusiasm in the United States to lift the embargo and start tourism to Cuba. For David Alan Harvey, however, Cuba has been like a second home for many years now. His affection for the island is almost as legendary as the Magnum photographer himself, having spent over 20 years photographing Latin America. All of this is evident with each image seen in the book, and with the turn of every page. David's lens captures poignant moments from a high spirited nation.

The photographs are accompanied by the writings of *National Geographic* staff writer Elizabeth Newhouse, who provides a historical overview and discusses the country's culture, heritage, and the prevalent social conditions. "But above all Cuba is music," Newhouse writes, "expressing Cubans' intense joy in life, sensuality and machismo." This is always what the imagery successfully conveys.

The book captures the beautiful countryside, strong, proud people, the lively city life and the multicultural heritage. It does so while exploring the daily concerns of the impoverished locals who are living under a totalitarian government. The book remains, for me, one of the best examples of travel and documentary narratives in photography.

— Written by Aditya Nair



Third Time's the Charm? Canon Would Hope So...

Canon's mirrorless lineup has always seemed a bit behind the curve. It would appear that the company is trying to change that with the EOS M3, the third generation of their M-mount interchangeable lens camera. The M3 has a 24.2MP APS-C sensor and a 49-point hybrid AF system.

However, the camera's design changes appear to be quite significant. The deeper

grip, new user interface, and the overall look of a compact DSLR, should improve the



handling quite a bit. An in-built pop-up flash leaves the hotshoe free to be used with an optional EVF.

Off Photography and Wooden Cameras

Apex-Academy for Photographic Excellence organized a workshop with Tikka Ram, a photographer from Jaipur, with his Afghan wooden box camera.

During the course of the two-day workshop held in New Delhi, each student got a chance to use the camera and to develop the paper negatives that the device utilises! The workshop is part of the Academy's efforts to familiarise students with film, darkroom techniques and the history of photography.



Image Courtesy: Apex-Academy

The Pentax K-S2 says Goodbye to Flashing LEDs

The update of the Pentax K-S1 comes with a 20MP APS-C sensor, weathersealed construction, Wi-Fi-NFC capabilities, a fully articulated LCD and a standard grip.

Basically, the new K-S2 is abandoning what can at best be described as the unconventional design

of the K-S1, which included flashing LED lights. It also happens to be the smallest

DSLRs to offer these features.



The camera uses an 11-point SAFOX X AF module offering 9 cross-type points. It also has in-body Shake Reduction and will be available for USD 799 (approx. Rs. 50,000), with a Pentax smc DA L 18-50mm f/4-5.6 DC WR kit zoom.

Better Photography

Our ever curious and passionate love affair with the camera will never cease. And so be it as Better Photography, India's first magazine completely devoted to the art and science of photography presents an expansive imagery like no other can. It is also the best-selling photography magazine in India and South Asia.

www.betterphotography.in

WEBSITE



www.gurushots.com

GuruShots brings live photo challenges right to your desktop. It gives you the chance to compete and learn from photographers from all around the world.

After signing up to the website, you can choose from the several genre-based challenges, created by the website's 'gurus'. However, if you don't want to participate, you can also just vote for your favourite photographs. Each contest has its own prizes and, winners are selected based on the number of votes that they receive. Even though this is a great way to increase website participation, there is a chance that a average photograph may get selected as the winner. Nevertheless, one winner is also chosen by the contest's designated guru.

Overall, I quite enjoyed navigating my way around the different contests and photographs. Not only is it interactive but also very inviting. Even the prizes, which include USD 80 (approx. Rs. 5000) Amazon gift vouchers and stylish Miggo straps, are pretty good.

— Written by Conchita Fernandes

APP REVIEW

FLIPAGRAM

Bring Moments to Life!

Create short video stories from your photos, set to music you love!

Start

The Flipagram app lets you create effortless photo montages, which you can put together as a personal album or to share on social networks like Instagram.

The best thing is that you can select as many images as you want. However, before converting the pictures to a video, the app gives you the option of resizing your images to fit into a square. After the video is created, you can decide its length by choosing anywhere from 15 seconds for Instagram, 30 seconds for Flipagram, or you can set your own time limit. Additionally, you can also add text and music to the video. The only thing that is distracting is the app's watermark that appears on the bottom of the video. If you want to get rid of it or want to use your own watermark, then it will cost Android users around Rs. 62. I really liked that with every addition that I made, I was able to preview the video. However, depending on the number of images, the final video might take some time to process.

Available for Android, iOS and Windows users, Flipagram is great if you want to make a fun and interactive video of say a holiday trip or a party that you attended, without bombarding your social media with too many photographs.

—Conchita Fernandes

Within the NX500, beats the Heart of the Samsung NX1

Several features borrowed from Samsung's flagship the NX1, have been stuffed into the tiny mirrorless NX500. These include the same 28MP sensor, WiFi, a drive mode of 9fps, an ISO range of 100–25600 and 4k video capabilities. The camera also has a 180° tilting, 1.04million dot 3-inch LCD, and also borrows the hybrid AF system from the NX1.

The camera will be available in black, white, and brown. The NX500 is priced at USD 800 (approx. Rs. 50,000), and comes along with a 16-50mm f/3.5-5.6 PZ ED OIS kit lens.



Artificial Skylight Can Recreate Natural Sunlight

CoeLux, a high tech artificial skylight, can recreate natural sunlight in rooms that are cutoff from the outside world.

This has been done using a thin coating of nanotechnology that can accurately simulate how sunlight follows through the Earth's atmosphere, going through an effect known as Rayleigh scattering. As a result, not only is the colour temperature of light the same, it also has the quality of real sunlight.

Photographs seen on the CoeLux site, including the one shown here, comes with a note that says, "The

photographs on this site are real and unretouched. They are not computer renderings." While designed for areas like gyms, hospitals and basements, it is easy to find use for the lights in a photographic studio as well.

According to the company, future improvements will include the ability to change the position of the sun in the frame and dynamic color temperature of the sunlight. Of course, the setup comes with a pricetag of USD 61,000 (approx. Rs. 38 lakhs), and an installation charge of USD 7600 (approx. Rs. 4.7 lakhs).



'Phantom' Photographer Sold Images Worth 500Mn

Last year, Peter Lik's image titled *Phantom* made headlines when it sold for USD 6.5 million (approx. Rs. 40 crores). However, if a recent interview of his with *The New York Times* is to be believed, that may just be the tip of the iceberg.

According to the interview, the photographer has sold nearly USD 440 million (approx. Rs. 2730 crores) in fine art prints, which would make him the most successful photographer who ever lived!

Nearly each of his prints are 'limited editions'... one out of 995. While the first one sells for USD 4000 (approx. Rs. 2.50 lakhs), the price of the image increase as it sells out. David Segal writes, "With his eye fixed on a record-setting sale, he printed a single copy of *Phantom*. Then he alerted a handful of his



Peter Lik

most ardent collectors, one of whom, he said, agreed to the USD 6.5 million pricetag. Before the deal was signed, Mr. Lik hired a public relations firm to make sure that the sale and the record, were noticed."

The interview gives you insight into the mind of Peter Lik, and also the business of fine art photography. It can be read here, www.nyti.ms/1JApbm4

Khamam Photographer Wins National Level Contest

Chava Sampath Kumar, a photographer from Khamam in Telangana, won the award for his images that depict the glorious cultural heritage of adivasi tribes. The national level photography contest was organised by the Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs and the Photo Division of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

Chava received his prize of Rs. 15,000 at the closing ceremony of the first National Tribal Festival, which was held in New Delhi on 18 February.



Chava Sampath Kumar

Statement about ownership and other particulars about newspaper/periodical namely Better Photography, as required to be published in the first issue of every year after the last day of February Form IV (See rule 8 of The Registration of Newspapers (Central) Rules, 1956)

27

1. Place of Publication: Network18 Media & Investments Limited, Empire Complex, 1st Floor, 414, Senapati Bapat Marg, Lower Parel, Mumbai – 400013.
2. Periodicity of Publication: Monthly
3. Printer's Name: Mr. Sandeep Khosla
Nationality: Indian
Address: Network18 Media & Investments Limited, Empire Complex, 1st Floor, 414, Senapati Bapat Marg, Lower Parel, Mumbai – 400013.
4. Publisher's name: Mr. Sandeep Khosla
Nationality: Indian
Address: Network18 Media & Investments Limited, Empire Complex, 1st Floor, 414, Senapati Bapat Marg, Lower Parel, Mumbai – 400013.
5. Editor's Name: Mr. K Madhavan Pillai
Nationality: Indian
Address: Network18 Media & Investments Limited, Empire Complex, 1st Floor, 414, Senapati Bapat Marg, Lower Parel, Mumbai – 400013.
6. Names and addresses of individuals who own the newspaper & partners or shareholders holding more than 1% of the total capital: Network18 Media & Investments Limited is the owner of the publication namely **Better Photography**, having its registered office at 503, 504 & 507, 5th Floor, Mercantile House, 15, K. G. Marg, New Delhi - 110 001.

Details of the shareholders of Network18 Media & Investments Limited who holds more than 1% of the paid up equity capital of the Company as on 30th January 2015 is given below:

1. **RRB MEDIASOFT PRIVATE LIMITED**
403, Prabhat kiran, 17, Rajendra place, new delhi -110 008
2. **RB MEDIASOFT PRIVATE LIMITED**
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11. **INDEPENDENT MEDIA TRUST** (Shares held in the name of its Trustee – Sanchar Content Private Limited)
3Rd Floor Maker Chamber IV, 222 Nariman Point, Mumbai - 400 021
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503 504 And 507, 5Th Floor Mercantile House, 15 Kasturba Gandhi Marg, New Delhi - 110 001

I, Sandeep Khosla, Hereby Declare That All Particulars Given Above Are True To The Best Of My Knowledge And Belief.

Dated: 11th February 2015

SANDEEP KHOSLA
Signature of the Publisher

Nikon Announces Seven New Compact Cameras

Building up to CP+, Nikon announced five new COOLPIX cameras focusing on zoom, and two new rugged compact cameras. The zoom-centric cameras are the P610, L840, S9900, S7000 and S6900 which are stabilised, use a 16MP sensor, and have built-in WiFi. Out of the five, the P610 offers the greatest zoom (24–1440mm).

Refreshing Nikon's rugged lineup are the AW130 and S33. The AW130 sports a

16MP sensor, 24–120mm equivalent zoom, 1080/30p video capture, Wi-Fi/NFC

and built-in GPS. It is waterproof to 30m, shockproof up to 2.1m and freezeproof down to -10C. The more budget friendly



S33 has a 13.2MP CMOS sensor, 3x zoom range and can shoot 1080/30p video. It is waterproof to 10m, shockproof from 1.5m and freezeproof to -10C.



Photozine to Promote the Beauty of Printed Images

The photo magazine *Deep Freeze*, is the brain child of photographer Kaushal Parikh. The monthly publication's first issue was published in February.

Kaushal says, "Some issues will be dedicated to individual photographers, while others will be a consolidation of inspiring images made by a variety of photographers." Thematic issues are also being planned.

Initial issues of the magazine will showcase black and white imagery. For more information about *Deep Freeze* visit, www.kaushalp.com/deep-freeze

LOOK WHO'S SHOOTING

28



Ravi Choudhary is a photographer for the *New Indian Express*. His series *Dairies of Acid Victims* is part of a group exhibition at the India Habitat Centre, New Delhi from 25 February–8 March.

Diaries of Acid Victims

Acid attack victims are left completely confounded by the trauma of the incident. "It is one of the worst forms of crimes against women. It is not just an emotional or mental trauma, but also a lingering pain to try and cope up with life after the attack. Moreover, the treatment too, for an acid attack victim is very expensive," says Ravi Choudhary. The 29-year-old photographer has been documenting these atrocities and the harsh realities of the lives of the victims.

He tells the story of Arif, who is fighting a case against the attackers of his 14 year old daughter, Tuba.

"The accused are claiming to be juveniles, and if proven so, they will be scott free, as the Indian judicial system does not have provision of a harsher punishment of juveniles guilty of hideous crimes."

Often, the perpetrator is well known to the victim and the only instigation is simple rejection. With only vengeance in mind, these attackers often throw acid at their victim's faces, burning them, and damaging skin tissue.

— Written by Aditya Nair

"The worst part is that acid attack is a crime not committed out of lust or by a person in inebriated state, rather as a way of vengeance."



Ravi Choudhary

☞ "For some victims the fight is even tougher. The society they live in believes that there must be some fault of the girl for such an incident to occur. When the real picture is that rejection results in acid attacks, but the society remains blind to it," says Ravi.

Konica Enters the Limca Book of World Records

Book of Records certified Konica Minolta for the largest media display created on glass facade ever at the Dhaula Kuan Metro station in New Delhi. The record marked an end to Konica Minolta's marketing campaign.

The display was installed by JC Decaux Advertising India and measured 100.58m (330ft) wide and 12.8m (42ft) high. "To be recognised by the Limca Book of Records is an honour. We believe in doing things differently and strive to create new value for our users," says V Balakrishnan, Executive General Manager, Konica Minolta India.



Flashgun Maker Metz in Financial Trouble

Metz, a German photographic equipment manufacturer, has filed insolvency according to German media organisations. The company is known for producing lighting equipment, flashguns and video lights. Insolvency administrator Joachim Exner, has noted that Metz's everyday services would continue for the time being. He mentions laying down long term plans for 'keeping the business afloat, while securing as many jobs as possible'.

Konica Minolta Declared Environment Leader

Konica Minolta was ranked number one, in the overall ranking of the Environmental Management Survey, by the Nikkei Environmental Management. NEM is one of the most prestigious assessment institutions in Japan, and has been assessing companies for their environmental initiatives since 1997.

"We are proud to be recognised for our environmental consciousness and green initiatives. We always intend to turn our courageous ideas and groundbreaking technologies into products and services, with high level of environmental performance, and will continue contributing to further reduction of carbon emissions in a global society," says Mr Yuji Nakata, MD, Konica Minolta India.

The company also recently showcased its newly launched JET Varnish 3D.

It was designed by MGI Digital Graphic Technology, at the 12th Print Pack 2015, held in Greater Noida Indian Expo Center from 11-15 February 2015.

Designed for 2D and 3D applications, JET Varnish 3D amplifies digital spot UV coating, by increasing the output for flat and spot UV jobs, and giving great 3D effects. It is ideal for operations with digital and offset presses.



Tokina Announces Two New Lenses at CP+

Tokina released the AT-X 24-70mm f/2.8 PRO DX V lens for full frame cameras, and the AT-X 11-20mm (17-30mm equivalent) f/2.8 PRO DX lens for APS-C bodies. According to the company, the AT-X 11-20mm will be available for purchase in India by March.

The lens builds on the design of the earlier 16-20mm f/2.8 lens, and uses a total of three aspherical lens elements, two all glass molded and one P-MO hybrid. Through this it is able to achieve better contrast and sharpness, as well as correct spherical aberrations.

Tokina has also said that the AT-X 116 PRO DX V, which was announced prior to CP+, will hit the Indian market by March. This lens adds interlocking follow focus gear to one of Tokina's most popular lenses—

the AT-X 116 DX-II. As a result, this may become the lens of choice for videographers. Essentially, the manual focusing ring that has an interlocking focus gear allows the lens to be used in with a cinema follow focus system that allows operators to be more efficient and precise when focusing.



Better Photography

Our ever curious and passionate love affair with the camera will never cease. And so be it as Better Photography, India's first magazine completely devoted to the art and science of photography presents an expansive imagery like no other can. It is also the best-selling photography magazine in India and South Asia.

www.betterphotography.in

GearGuide

HOW WE TEST

Product Categorisation

We first segregate products into categories for the purpose of equitability in testing. The DSLR is divided into entry-level, semi-professional and professional categories. For compacts, we distinguish between advanced and basic compact cameras. Similarly, we also test consumer and pro lenses, flashguns, printers, and other photographic accessories and gear.

The Process

We primarily test for features, performance, build, ergonomics, warranty and support. While this remains constant, the weightage we give to these parameter differs from category to category, because different types of consumers have diverse expectations from products.

Final Ratings

Under each main parameter, we list out hundreds of individual variables (for eg. colour accuracy for individual colours in different lighting, individual features, dynamic range, center-to-edge definition, light falloff, etc) against which we either give points or simply mark 'yes' or 'no'. Thus, we arrive at a score for that parameter, and then, the final score, denoted as a percentage. Additionally, based on the current pricing of a product, a star rating for 'Value for Money' is considered. Value for Money does not affect the final percentage, because prices for products change constantly.

Our Seals of Approval

Any product that scores 80% or higher in individual tests gets 'BP Recommended'—a seal of approval from our team. In comparison tests, we also tag products as 'BP Best Performer' and 'BP Best Value for Money'.

BP Excellence Awards

At the end of the calendar year, the highest rated products in each category automatically win the Better Photography Excellence Award. This is Better Photography's recognition of the very best products launched in the course of the year, and the companies that made them.



Sony Alpha A7M2

Sony's New Alpha Dog?

While the Sony Alpha A7M2 looks like a good update, Aditya Nair wonders where the camera fits, in Sony's E-mount lineup.

Watching Sony attack the professional and serious enthusiast camera segments has been nothing short of incredible. Imagine the dominant camera manufacturers, Canon and Nikon, as a massive boulders for a second... instead of attacking them head on, like giant corporations often do, Sony choose to be water, seeping into the cracks and crevices left in between the established camera segments.

As a result, Sony has pulled off quite the coup d'etat by launching innovative products in segments that didn't exist—DSLTs and the use of translucent mirrors, APS-C sensors into the small NEX cameras, a pocketable 1-inch sensor camera with a fixed, fast zoom lens like the RX100 series. Finally, of course, the crown

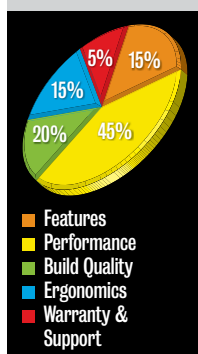
jewel, a full frame sensor in the small form factor of the A7 series. With all of this promise and hype in mind, I began to test the second generation Sony Alpha A7.

Features

The A7M2 packs a 24MP sensor just like its predecessor but improves the overall handling of the camera and the AF system. The most significant new feature, though, is the addition of 5-axis in-body image stabilisation, similar to the kind seen in the Olympus OMD E-M5. This makes it the first full frame camera to have this feature.

With in-built IS, most lenses attached to the camera are stabilised. The 5-axis stabilisation helps correct for shake across X, Y, Yaw, Pitch and Roll. The company claims that the IS function is good for up to 4.5 stops. In day-to-day use, I think that it

WEIGHTAGE OF PARAMETERS



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Nikon 1AW1
How tough is this
rugged camera?
40



TEST
Sony DT 35mm f/1.8 SAM
A fast standard lens with a
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was good up to 3 stops, after which it became a bit of a hit or miss. Additionally, in some instances, I noticed a sort of halo forming in the images as a result of the stabilisation.

For Sony's own lenses, this system works automatically. There is an option that allows the user to input a specific focal length, which will be useful when using third party lenses.

For in-body IS to work, the camera needs information about the focal distance as well as the focal length of the lens used. As the focal distance needs to be communicated electronically, in-body IS may not work with lenses that lack electronic parts, like purely manual focus lenses.

The 5-axis IS in the OMD E-M5 has always been amongst the best. This remains the case when compared to the A7M2. However, the Sony cameras are at a disadvantage given that they need to stabilise a sensor that is four times as large as the MFT sensor in the E-M5. Given the high resolution 24MP sensor and the A7M2's video features, I am grateful for its inclusion.

⚠ While not quite as good as its illustrious siblings, the A7S and the A7R, images made with the A7M2 have a good dynamic range.

With video, while the resolution and frame rate remain the same at 1080p60, videographers will welcome the inclusion of the XAVC S codec that can record video at a 50Mbps bitrate. The S Log2 flat colour profile also helps maximise the dynamic range captured for enhanced video editing.

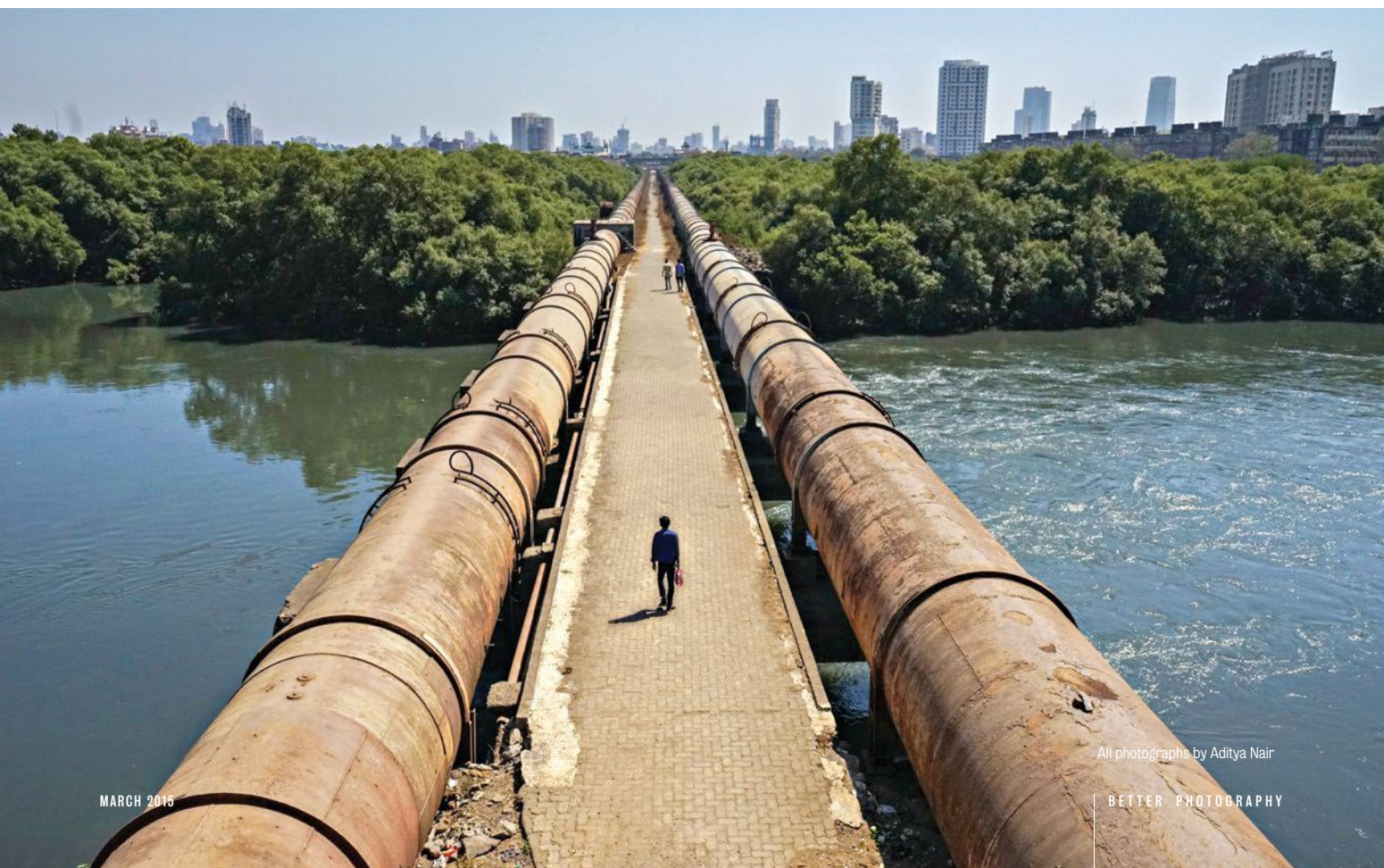
Other features in the camera include a 3-inch tilting LCD, a XGA OLED viewfinder, WiFi with NFC and Multi-interface hotshoe.

Handling

The original A7 suffered from a NEX series hangover when it came to the design. This took a lot away from an otherwise great camera. Therefore, the design overhaul seen in the A7M2 goes a long way in improving the overall shooting experience. By changing the button placement and adding a much deeper grip, the camera comes close to DSLR-like handling.

The camera retains the magnesium alloy build of the original A7 but adds a magnesium alloy lens mount as well. Improving the overall rigidity when using ▶

The lack of a pop-up flash is a major drawback with the Sony A7 series... One that still hasn't been fixed with the Sony A7M2.





TEST



The quiet camera and tilting LCD helped me shoot quite discreetly without attracting the attention of these furry little guys.
Exposure: 1/200sec at f/4.5 (ISO 800)

Test Shots



A Worthy Kit Lens?

The Sony FE 28–70mm f/3.5–5.6 OSS kit lens is competent for its price but is rather unspectacular. Personally, I don't think it does enough justice to the camera. The centre sharpness of the lens is quite good, but not so much at the edges. There is a bit of fringing and vignetting to deal with as well.



On Compressed RAWs

The Sony A7 series have upset users because of lossy compression in the RAW files that the camera creates. That said, we are yet to test the RAWs from the A7M2 against a similar 24MP full frame sensor to see if it has any real world implication.

heavy lenses. I still noticed some wobbling when using the Sony 70–200 f/4, though not so much with the 28–70mm kit lens.

On to battery life, Sony's ever persistent foible. The 1020mAh battery runs out way too quickly for a camera of this nature and is also very slow to charge. Like other Sony cameras, the battery needs to be charged within the camera. This has certain advantages because you can charge the camera with a regular smartphone charger. However, since it isn't a separate charging unit, you can't leave one battery to charge while shooting with another.

Performance

In terms of image quality and ISO performance not much has changed between the A7 and the A7M2. The camera can shoot up to 5fps and has a buffer capability to hold around 20 RAW+JPEGs.

The growing trend of cameras without lowpass filters hasn't yet caught up with the A7M2. However, this hardly makes a real world difference as the images produced by the A7M2 are quite sharp. The moiré reduction will benefit videographers too.

The A7M2 has a 117 phase-detect point AF system with 25 contrast-detect points,

WHAT'S IN THE BOX

- Sony A7M2 body
- Sony 28–70mm f/3.5–5.6 Kit lens
- Charger
- Battery
- Audio Video cable
- Camera strap
- Hot Shoe cover
- Body & Lens caps
- Warranty & Manual
- Software CD-ROM

ERGONOMICS

Front



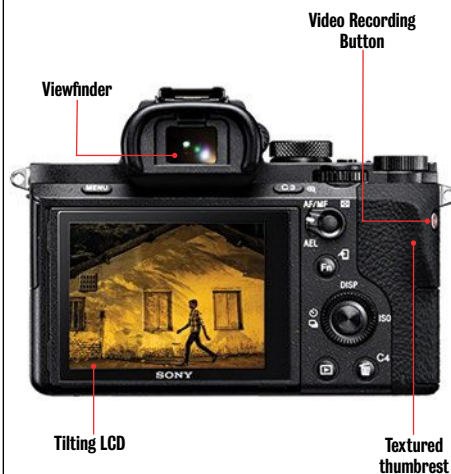
The much deeper grip is quite noticeable from the moment you lay your eyes on the camera. The grip and inclusion of IS is probably the reason, the A7M2 looks a lot chunkier than its predecessor, yet it manages to remain quite a small camera.

Top



The camera offers a significant amount of customisation. There are four customisable buttons (three of which are seen in the top view of the camera) as well as a customisable rear dial and an exposure compensation dial on the top.

Rear



My only grievance with the new design is the placement of the video recording button on the right side of the camera. Trying to use the button was quite annoying as I would end up changing my composition often.

SPECIFICATIONS

Model name	Sony Alpha A7M2
MRP	Rs. 1,34,990 (Body only) Rs. 1,54,990 (with a FE 28–70mm f/3.5-5.6 OSS lens)
Effective pixels	24MP, 6000 x 4000
Sensor size, type	35.8 x 23.9mm, Full frame
Aspect ratio (w:h)	3:2 / 16:9
Processor	Bionz X
Focusing type; modes	Hybrid AF system (phase detect and contrast AF); Multi-area, Center, Single, Continuous, Face Detection, Live View AF
AF points	117 Phase-detect AF points, 25 Contrast detect AF points
Focal length multiplier	1x
Metering	Multi, Spot, Center-weighted
Shutterspeed range	30sec–1/8000sec
Exp. compensation	-/+3 EV (at 1/3 EV steps)
ISO	100–25600
White Balance	Auto WB, 10 Presets, Custom
Drive modes	Single, Continuous: Hi, Continuous: Low, Bracketing
Built-in flash	No
LCD	3-inch, 1.23 million dots
Viewfinder	Yes
Image stabilisation	Yes, 5-axis stabilisation up to 4.5 stops
Storage types	SD, SDHC, SDXC
Wireless	No
Formats	Image: JPEG, RAW; Video: MPEG-4, AVCHD, XAVC S
Video	1920 x 1080 (60p, 60i, 24p), 1440 x 1080 (30p), 640 x 480 (30p),
Battery	NP-FW50 lithium-ion
Dimensions, Weight	127 x 96 x 60 mm, 599g


The JPEG engine of the Sony A7M2 shows improvement over its predecessor, but is still not good enough for a camera of its price. Exposure: 1/320sec at f/5.6 (ISO 100)

similar to its predecessor. The company claims that by tweaking the algorithms it has managed to make it 30% faster with a 1.5 times better tracking capabilities than the A7.

That may be, but I found it to be slower than what I would have wanted, especially in low light where it hunts. There were times when the camera confirmed focus even though the subject was completely blurred. What was rather upsetting was that the camera lacked the fast 4D Focus technology seen in the A6000 and A5100, cameras that were released long before the A7M2.

Conclusion

Writing this review for the Alpha A7M2, is thus bitter-sweet. The inclusion of in-built IS, a first for full frame cameras and significantly improved handling make for a worthy update. However, the camera also shows a plateauing in the A7 series lineup and was less exciting than the first generation of the cameras. The lack of a fast enough AF-system was a definite downer.

There is also the dilemma of too many options in the Sony lineup. The low light and 4k video monster, the A7S is available for Rs. 1,54,990. Alternatively, the resolution chomper, the 36MP A7R can be bought for Rs. 1,24,990. The original A7 is also still being sold at Rs. 94,990. So, is the inclusion of IS and improved handling in the A7M2 worth the additional Rs. 40,000? 

Noise Test



A bit of noise can be seen even in images shot at ISO 400 but images still remain useable up to ISO 3200. Use ISO 6400 only in dire circumstances. JPEGs created by the Sony A7M2 show aggressive noise reduction and softening of images too.

PLUS

- Improved design
- In-body IS
- Price

MINUS

- No pop-up flash
- Lacks 4K video

37

FINAL RATINGS

Features 5-axis stabilisation, deeper grip, WiFi with NFC	12/15
Performance Good image quality, AF not quick enough, decent buffer	40/45
Build Quality Standard weather resistance, magnesium alloy body and mount,	17/20
Ergonomics Tilting screen, EVF, better grip, awkwardly position video button	12/15
Warranty & Support Wide service network, two-year warranty	3/5

OVERALL 84%

Who should buy it? Anyone looking for a full frame camera but don't need extreme low light capabilities or 4k video.

Why? For its size, the inclusion of IS and its overall performance and image quality make it quite a competent camera for most uses.

Value for Money ★★★★★☆



Nikon 1 AW1

Surprisingly Rugged

The Nikon 1 AW1 was the latest to join the Nikon 1 lineup. Natasha Desai finds out how well the rugged interchangeable lens camera holds up.

When the Nikon 1 AW1 was announced, it sent ripples of excitement through the industry. The world's first rugged interchangeable lens camera was set to arrive! For many, the announcement was reminiscent of the NIKONOS range of underwater cameras of the 1960s, which could go down 35metres more than the AW1. So, just how good is the rugged Nikon 1 AW1?

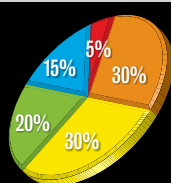
Features

When I first saw the camera, it didn't look 'rugged'. It is certainly not pocketable with the 11-27.5mm lens on. But, the AW1 is waterproof upto 15m, shockproof from 2m

and freezeproof upto -10°C, the same as the Olympus TG-3. It is based on the Nikon 1 system, which means it has a 14.2MP Nikon CX sensor. In terms of 35mm, you get a range of about 30-74mm with the 11-27.5mm lens attached. It does not extend when you change the focal length, and neither when focusing. There is also an all weather 10mm f/2.8 lens available for this camera.

It is a bit of a push to attach these lenses because of the O-ring around the lens mount. This O-ring is what keeps the water from getting inside. It is possible to use the other Nikon 1 series of lenses with the camera, but this will mean that it will no longer be waterproof and the O-ring will be left exposed. Nikon has added a

WEIGHTAGE OF PARAMETERS



- Features
- Performance
- Build Quality
- Ergonomics
- Warranty & Support

protective covering for the O-ring that is housed in the body cap of the camera. The pop-up flash is sealed internally and the HDMI ports, battery and memory card compartments are sealed as well. The camera also comes with an altimeter, a depth gauge, an electronic compass and can record GPS data as well.

This camera has an Action Control button, allowing you choose between modes like Motion Snapshot, Best Moment Capture, Auto, Creative and Advanced Movie, just by tilting the camera. With this button, you can adjust the mode when shooting, and toggle the LCD's display when in the menu. While this is a handy feature to have underwater or when using with gloved hands, you still have to use the buttons to go further in.

For example, the Advanced Movie menu offers a bunch of modes. While I can access it just by pressing the Action Control button and tilting, I have to then use the four way control pad to get to the modes.

Other modes under the Creative menu include Program Mode, Aperture Priority, Shutter Priority and Manual Mode, along with Underwater, Backlighting, Night Portrait, Night Landscape, Soft, Miniature, Selective Colour and Easy Panorama modes.

One interesting mode is the Motion Snapshot, which captures a one second clip of HD video along with a still image. It then puts the two together with a music track while playing the video in slow motion. Here, I wish there were more options for the tracks as the current ones feature piano music that doesn't really go with sports or underwater scenes.

On the other hand, there is the Best Moment Capture. It shows you a sequence of frames from the scene in front of you, when you half-press the shutter-release button. From this sequence, you can either select one frame by pressing the shutter-release in Slow View or have the camera automatically save five frames. This comes in handy when shooting action scenes or pets. ▶

Leaving the GPS off is recommended as the camera's battery life is average, at best.

⚡ During RAW processing, there was a fair amount of highlights recovery possible.
Exposure: 1/1600sec at f/6.3 (ISO 160)



Test Shots



Good Burst Mode

The AW1 has a burst mode with 5, 15, 30 and 60fps which is good to capture action. At 30 and 60fps, the focus locks on the first frame.



Great Colours

When viewing images straight out of the box, the colours are vibrant. The LCD too, accurately presents the colours, without any surprises when viewed on screen.

PLUS

- Sturdy
- 60fps shooting
- AF speed

MINUS

- No mode dial
- No EVF
- Poor battery life

Handling

Along with the battery and memory card, the AW1 weighs 356g, and becomes heavier once the kit lens is attached. It feels pretty solid when you pick it up which was surprising as I mentioned earlier, it did not look rugged. The camera survived several drops, as well as countless bumps on various surfaces.

The camera looks and feels much like a regular compact. I did miss an EVF when above water at times, but then that would have meant yet one more element to the rugged camera.

What ticked me off was the way the direct controls have been set. To adjust aperture and the shutter speed values, you have to press the playback zoom buttons situated above the thumb rest. To toggle

between shutter speed and aperture you have to use the four-way controller which is below the thumb rest. ISO sensitivity was another tiresome affair, requiring one to go all the way inside the Menu to adjust it.

Performance

Underwater, the camera performed well. I liked the grip and the zoom ring is big enough to easily change the focal length. Also, managing the controls underwater was easy enough.

After about two and a half hours of continuous shooting, the battery ran out, leaving me quite disappointed, and I managed to make about 140 frames during this time. Another area where it did not do so well was at night. Its low

ALSO LOOK FOR

- Pentax WG-3
- Olympus Stylus T-3 Tough

ERGONOMICS

Front



From the front, the AW1 looks much like a compact camera. It also has a textured grip just like some others in the Nikon 1 series. However, with the lens attached, the camera becomes unpocketable.

Top



There is no dedicated mode dial on the top. On the other hand, the shutter release and video control buttons are large and easy to grip when underwater. The pop-up flash compartment is unobtrusive.

Rear



The back features the Action Control button and a four-way directional pad to control various settings. Pressing the display button when shooting will bring up the electronic compass on the screen.

SPECIFICATIONS

Model name	Nikon 1 AW1
MRP	Rs. 39,950 (with 11-27.5mm f/3.5-5.6 lens)
Effective pixels	14.2, 4608 x 3072
Sensor size, type	13.2 x 8.8mm, CMOS
Aspect ratio (w:h)	3:2
Focusing type, modes	Contrast Detect, Phase Detect, Autofocus, Single AF, Continuous AF, Auto AF-S/AF-C selection, Full-time AF (AF-F), Manual focus (MF)
AF points	135
Focal length multiplier	2.7x
Metering	Matrix, Center-weighted, Spot
Shutterspeed range	30sec-1/16000sec
Exp. compensation	-/+3 EV (at 1/3 EV steps)
ISO	Auto, 160-6400
White Balance	Auto, Underwater, Flash, Shade, Cloudy, Incandescent, Fluorescent, Direct sunlight, Preset Manual.
Drive modes	Single frame, Continuous, Self-timer
Built-in flash	Pop-up, 5m at ISO 100, 20 °C
Flash modes	Fill flash, red-eye reduction, fill flash w/slow sync, red-eye reduction w/slow sync, rear curtain w/slow sync, rear-curtain sync, off
LCD	3-inch, 9,21,000 dot
Viewfinder	None
Image stabilisation	No
Storage types	SD/SDHC/SDXC
Wireless	None
Video	Yes, 1920 x 1080 (60i, 30p), 1280 x 720 (60p, 30p), Slow motion 640 x 240 (400 fps), 320 x 120 (1200 fps)
Battery	EN-EL20a Lithium ion
Dimensions, Weight	113.3 x 71.5 x 37.5mm, 356g


light performance is quite average. However, the pop-up flash does offer both TTL and Manual and can be raised by a button at the rear.

As far as image quality goes, the camera does pretty well. You have to remember that the camera is more about ruggedness and durability than image quality. In addition to this, its autofocus is speedy, working well with action scenes that required tracking subjects, without much hunting. The camera has a continuous speed of 60, 30, 15 and 5fps. After 15fps, that is, at 30 and 60fps, you can capture a maximum of 20 frames.

The camera has different movie modes and supports 1080p and 720p video, as well as slow motion videos at 640 x 240 at 400fps, on a memory card with a write speed of 40MB/s.

Conclusion

After using the camera for a while, I was left feeling a little conflicted. I liked the camera, it was fun to use, but there is room for improvement, especially where the controls are concerned. It could make for a nice vacation camera and professionals could consider it as a backup all weather option to their kits, but that is if they are willing to overlook a few things.

However, at Rs. 39,950 I would wait. I think this camera has potential and with a few tweaks, its successor could really blow us all away! 

Noise Test



The sharpness up to ISO 800 is quite good, but there is loss of detail soon after that. At ISO 1600, images are still usable for online uploads. In RAW processing, one can recover a fair amount of shadow and highlight details.

43

FINAL RATINGS

Features	25/30
Underwater shooting, several shooting modes, RAW capture at 60fps	
Performance	21/30
Great RAW quality, punchy colours, disappointing battery life	
Build Quality	18/20
Sturdy and rugged enough	
Ergonomics	12/15
No mode dial, manual controls placement could be better	
Warranty & Support	4/5
Two-year warranty, wide service facilities	

OVERALL 80%

Who should buy it? Beginners looking for a rugged underwater camera with manual controls.

Why? Its autofocus speed is great, and it offers shooting at 60fps along with great colour.

Value for Money ★★★★★



The super fast AF had no problem tracking quick movements.
Exposure: 1/500sec at f/4 (ISO 250)



Sony DT 35mm f/1.8 SAM

A Twist in the Tale

The Sony DT 35mm f/1.8 SAM is a good option for Sony APS-C camera users on a tight budget. K Madhavan Pillai puts this lens on the test bench.

Sony has been slowly but surely chiseling their way into a market by developing lineups to address various price segments. The DT 35mm f/1.8 SAM is an entry level APS-C format prime lens (signified by the DT, which rather ambiguously stands for 'Digital Technology'). It was released with the objective of luring an advanced hobbyist while keeping the price as low as possible.

Features

It delivers an equivalent focal length of 52.5mm, in full-frame parlance, which is a slightly narrower field of view than our normal vision and quite apt for people, street, architecture and some kinds of landscape photography. The maximum aperture of f/1.8 (similar to f/2.5 with a full frame) is quite useful in low light. It also allows a good level of constriction in the depth of field, and consequently, good bokeh.

Beyond this, the other features are unremarkable. There is no mistaking the low-budget nature of this lens. It is entirely built of plastics, including the mount. Made of six elements in five groups, the optical design is simplistic and there are no specialised elements to speak of. The focusing occurs by linear barrel extension. The lens motors are not entirely silent. The focus ring moves during AF but the front filter does not. There is no full-time MF override and forcefully rotating the MF ring without first uncoupling it

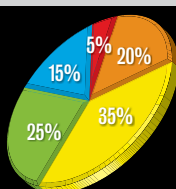
PLUS

- Overall sharpness
- Small and light
- Comes with lens hood

MINUS

- Plastic mount
- Loose focus ring

WEIGHTAGE OF PARAMETERS



- Features
- Performance
- Build Quality
- Ergonomics
- Warranty & Support

SPECIFICATIONS

Model name	Sony DT 35mm f/1.8 SAM
MRP	Rs. 15,490
Lens construction	6 elements in 5 groups
Angle of view	44° (APS-C)
Diaphragm blades	7
Filter diameter	55mm
Dimensions	70 x 52mm
Weight	170g



Suresh Narayanan

from the motor by switching from AF to MF can damage the lens. The minimum focus distance of 0.23m is reasonably good, at which distance the lens provides a maximum magnification ratio of 1:4.

Handling

This is a light lens that works rather well on the Alpha 77 II, despite its plastic feel. The focus ring is quite narrow. I always have a personal preference for an aperture ring to be present, and this lens does not have it. Neither does this lens make setting hyperfocal distances particularly easy, which is a shame. Somehow, all the leading manufacturers seem to be missing all these points nowadays, especially in this category of lenses where these features would be especially welcome.

Performance


So far, everything about the lens seemed average and decidedly lacklustre. However, it did throw up some good surprises when it came to performance. It is exceptionally sharp at f/1.8, especially at the center of the frame. There was visible lateral fringing at the edges, but it was well-controlled for a lens of its type. The bokeh has the expected sharp edges. By f/2.8 and

f/4, there is a dramatic improvement to the point where this lens starts competing with far more expensive primes. Bokeh too is significantly improved with softer edges. There is a slight, easily correctable barrel distortion. Other optical aberrations were kept to a minimum.

Despite the older AF motor, focusing speed is quick, but there is a slight hunting at f/1.8 especially at closer focussing distances because of the critical depth of field. On the whole, I was very happy with what the lens was able to deliver at its price point.

Conclusion

The lens is priced at Rs 15,490, which is about the equivalent price from other manufacturers for lenses of its kind. On the whole, my gripe with the general design of lenses of its type extends to all manufacturers, and it is unfortunate that Sony DT 35mm fell prey to most of the same issues. I say unfortunate... because this is otherwise an exceptional lens, both in optical performance and in value.

Serious Sony SLT users who don't otherwise have a viable upgrade path at this focal length will be happy to know that the Sony DT 35mm f/1.8 SAM is all they really need. 

➡ The lens exhibits excellent overall sharpness even at f/2.8. However, there is some amount of fringing that is visible.

Exposure: 1/50sec at f/2.8 (ISO 100)

FINAL RATINGS

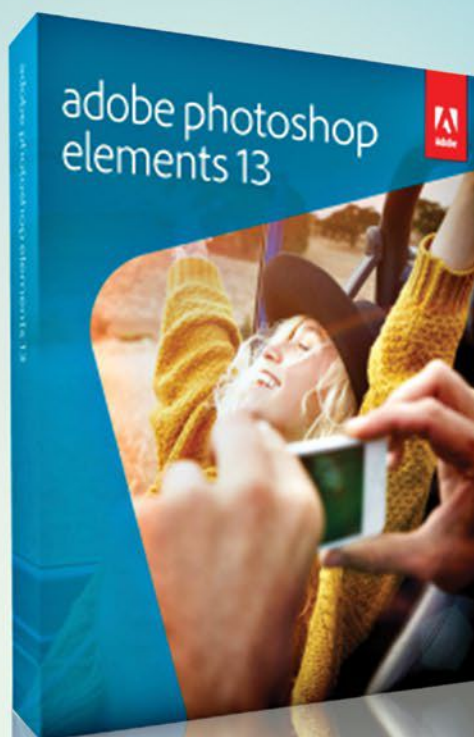
Features	15/20
Maximum aperture of f/1.8, minimum focusing distance of 0.23m	
Performance	33/35
Excellent sharpness, barrel distortion	
Build Quality	20/25
Plastic feel	
Ergonomics	13/15
No full time manual focus	
Warranty & Support	3/5
Wide area service network, two year warranty	

OVERALL 84%

Who should buy it? Users having the A-mount camera with APS-C sensor, who want to shoot street and people in available light conditions.

Why? With a maximum aperture of f/1.8, it will allow users to shoot in low light. Additionally, it exhibits good overall sharpness.

Value for Money ★★★★★☆



Adobe Photoshop Elements 13

46

Sibling Rivalries

Would you pay more for less features? Or, has Adobe become the snake that eats its own tail with Adobe Photoshop Elements 13. Aditya Nair finds out.

While Adobe Photoshop CC has remained my tool of choice over the years for editing images, it is always fun to test Photoshop Elements. Working in the shadows of it more illustrious older brothers, Photoshop CC and Lightroom, this simplified version has almost every feature a photographer would be interested without being intimidating.

Over the years, most features from the eldest sibling have found their way down to Elements. Unfortunately, that seemed to be the biggest drawback of Photoshop Elements 13. Looking at the latest update, it seems apparent that Adobe is out of ideas what to introduce in this version. The headlining acts in this version are a less than stellar Photomerge tool for creating image composites and a intelligent Crop tool

that suggests four different cropping options for your photographs.

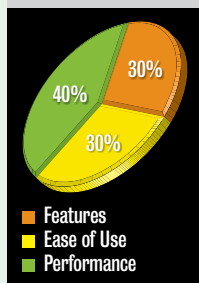
A Simple Design, Retained

PSE 13 is divided into Organizer and Editor modes. Think of Organizer as a stripped down version of Adobe Bridge, in that it lets you import and organise your files for editing. However, a major flaw for me was that I was unable to sort files by type.

If you choose to, you can give PSE 13 access to your Facebook account to help it identify and tag people in photos. Geotagging images is also available which displays images on a map. Although, it is not as effective as Lightroom or Bridge, it is still exceptionally good when you compare it to other paid consumer photo editing software like Corel PaintShop Pro that are available in the market today.

Having run out of ideas with new features to add, Adobe seems to be focusing making better images for sharing on social networks.

WEIGHTAGE OF PARAMETERS



The Organizer tab is among the best for consumer level photo editing software but is also quite slow.

Editing in Three Steps

As before, the Editor mode is divided into Quick, Guided and Expert tabs. There is also the eLive tab which beginners will find extremely handy. It lets you access online tutorials and inspiration within the software directly.

The Guided tab gives you step by step options to make changes to photographs. New to this tab is a B&W Color Pop feature. You can stylise images with text or create slideshows with the option to share them on Facebook as videos. It is also easier to sync your smartphones with PSE 13 to transfer images and save space.

A new Refine Selection Brush is very useful for making selections. It uses a circle with inner and outer selection options and can switch between adding and subtracting from a selection depending on whether the user is inside or outside the original selection.

The only other new feature that PSE 13 has for expert user is the Content Aware Fill

option from Photoshop. While you can run Photoshop Actions, I wasn't able to find a way to create them.

Improved Hardware Support

Photoshop Elements finally gets 64-bit support for Windows users. This should help speed up the process of editing and executing performance intensive tasks as well. High DPI and Retina Display Support will be welcomed by professionals. Finally, the software gets some 16bit image support, that is, you can open them in Adobe Camera RAW and apply basic edits.

So, What's Missing?

The version of ACR in Photoshop Elements 13 is still quite basic. I wish more of the functionality from Photoshop's ACR was introduced here like chromatic aberration correction and lens correction profiles. The Curves tool is also sorely missed. For good measure, they could have introduced shake reduction as well.

⬇ The Crop tool suggests different options while keeping in mind basic rules of composition like not cropping out faces.



Bundled With Premiere Elements 13



Photographers experimenting with video will probably enjoy the combination of Photoshop and Premiere Elements 13.

Automatically Create Great Movies

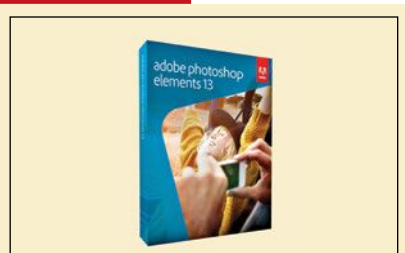
With Premiere Elements 13, you can select your favourite clips from videos and the software will automatically convert it into movies. The feature, Video Story, lets you choose the story type, video clips for each chapter. After that Premiere Elements does the rest—trimming, transitions, and music based on the

mood. This is a feature that wedding photographers will definitely love to exploit.

It's Really Simple To Use

While there are quite a few functions missing that professional editors would need, the software is very easy to use. This is what I enjoyed while using it. The enhanced Shake Stabilizer feature works towards reducing camera shake for better handheld or action camera video. It also has High DPI and Retina Display supports for Windows and Mac computers.

SPECIFICATIONS



Product name	Adobe Photoshop Elements 13
MRP	Rs. 6400 for PSE 13; Rs. 9600 for Photoshop and Premiere Elements 13
Processor	1.6GHz or faster processor
Operating system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microsoft Windows 7 or Windows 8 • Mac OS X v10.8, v10.9
RAM	2GB RAM (for both Windows and Mac users)
Monitor resolution	1024x768 display

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Not Quite Elementary

PSE 13 is a bit of a paradox. While it is a fantastic photo editing software, it is a fairly lacklustre upgrade. Currently, PSE 13 costs Rs. 6400 while Adobe India is bundling Photoshop CC 2014 and Lightroom for Rs. 6000 per year. Additionally, PSE upgrades each year cost about USD 80

(approx. Rs. 5000). Thus, at the moment, it is not the cheapest version of Photoshop.

Would you want to pay more for less features? I wouldn't. However, PSE 13 has the advantage of being a far simpler software. Therefore, I would still recommend it to absolute novices who are looking to learn photo editing.



I have often thought that Guided Edits would greatly benefit amateurs. However, I was disappointed that the only new addition was B&W Color Pop. It is a look that I absolutely loathe but I suppose there is a popular demand for it.

PLUS

- Intelligent Crop Tool
- PhotoMerge
- Simple Layout

MINUS

- Few new features
- Oddly, it's expensive

FINAL RATINGS

Features Refine Selection Brush, Content Aware Fill, not much else	24/30
Ease of use Simple interface, eLive mode, Guided Edits	28/30
Performance Improved hardware support, 64-bit version, RAW functionality could be better	33/40

OVERALL 85%

Value for Money ★★☆☆☆

Miggo Grip & Wrap and Strap & Wrap Camera Accessories

Giving Camera Bags a Run for their Money!

Conchita Fernandes takes Miggo's newest camera accessories for a test spin to see what's behind the stylish and innovative straps.

Both straps have been designed for left and right-handed photographers, and can be mounted on a tripod while the straps are still in place.

Miggo's quirky camera straps aims to bring its users style, functionality and protection in two different products—the Grip & Wrap and the Strap & Wrap. Each one has two separate variants designed for DSLRs and mirrorless cameras.

How Does it Work?

Both the straps come with a nickel-coated steel screw, which enables users to attach the camera's tripod mounting socket to the strap. Also, depending on the size of the lens, you can adjust the placement of your camera.

By inserting your hand into the Grip & Wrap strap, you will be able to hold the camera securely while you are shooting. However, Miggo advises users to attach a camera strap around your device for 'extra security and peace of mind.' Also, an adjustable cord is present to customise the strap depending on the width of your wrist.

The process is similar for the Strap & Wrap. However, unlike the Grip & Wrap, you can hang it around your neck or across your body. Its adjustable zipper makes it easy to wrap your camera and tuck it in your bag after you are done shooting. For added stability, both the products come with a safety cord, meant to be inserted through the camera and then the strap.

Putting it to the Test

The Grip & Wrap was quite easy to shoot with. The strap felt secure around my wrist

⚡ The straps are made up of high-grade neoprene and lycra material. This ensures that your camera is protected against bumps and scratches. However, they are not built to withstand extreme weather conditions.



Pictured here is the Strap & Wrap

and whenever I wasn't using the camera, I would simply cover the lens with the front portion of the strap. However, if you're shooting with a heavier camera, like a DSLR, then your hand may eventually tire from the weight. But, if you already have your camera's original strap around it, then this shouldn't be a problem.

In the case of the Strap & Wrap, I was comfortable with the camera dangling around my neck or shoulder. However, once again, if the camera is heavy, then it might cause slight strain on your neck. Nevertheless, both the straps make for good protective casings for the camera.

Another thing I'd like to point out is that the Strap & Wrap's length is non-adjustable. If you're around 5ft 4in in height, then your camera will hang all the way down to your thighs.

Final Verdict

If you're confused about which strap is perfect for your camera, Miggo (www.mymiggo.com) has created a unique measurement system to enable you to gauge the size of your device. Based on this they will also recommend the appropriate strap.

Overall, Miggo has come out with functional straps that remain true to their words. With camera bags costing as much as the straps, it all finally boils down to personal taste. I would recommend it to anyone looking for a stylish compact protective carrier, to use on a holiday or when you're casually out shooting. 

⚡ A little slit in the front of both the straps allows users to place their lens cap in it for safekeeping.

SPECIFICATIONS

- Product Name: Miggo Grip & Wrap
- MRP: Rs. 3500
- Length: 41cm
- Width: 14cm
- Weight: 0.2kg

SPECIFICATIONS

- Product Name: Miggo Strap & Wrap
- MRP: Rs. 4250
- Length: 59cm
- Width: 12cm
- Weight: 0.22kg

Product source:

Shetala Agencies
Pvt Ltd
Contact: 044-42125158

RATING



Pictured here is the Grip & Wrap

Better Cellphone Photography



DYNAMIC STORYTELLING

Photographs that breathe life into the different vistas of India
by Prashanth Vishwanathan

- On slowing down and using your cellphone for long exposures
- Showcasing the best of low light imagery in Readers' Images

“There should come a point when all the noise surrounding your work should be dampened by you.”



Go Away Closer

Every once in a while, it is a good thing to go away someplace and sit by yourself and your thoughts. Similarly, in photography, too, it is a good idea to take your work somewhere far away from the babble of critics, however well meaning, and also the mindless maze that is social media. There should come a point when you quit with all the critiquing and reviewing and feeding back. All of this is healthy, good, and even wise, but what of your voice? What have you taken from all that has been said about your

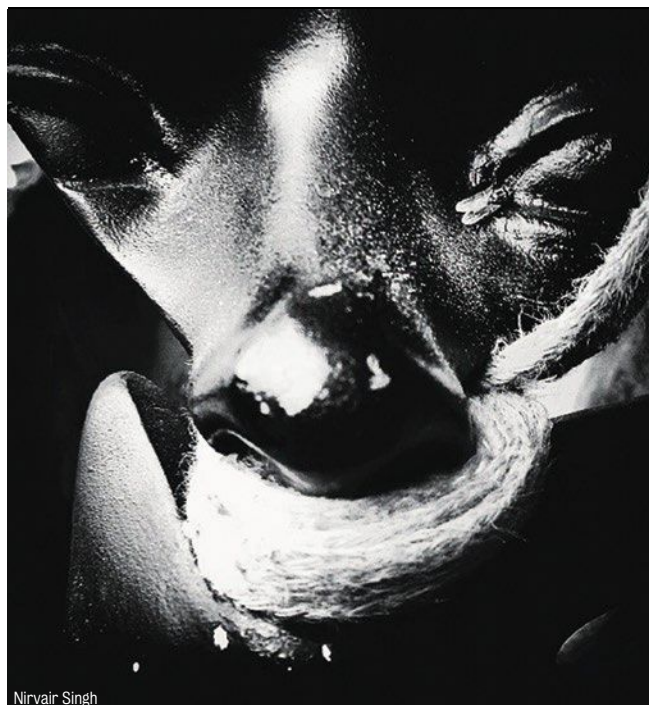
work? No two people will tell you the same thing—everyone will have different ideas—and in trying to piece them all together, you might just end up with a bit of a very haphazard patchwork.

It is important to try and seek out good advice, and it just as important to keep only the very essence of it in our minds. Take your work back to yourself and see it for what it truly is, what does it make you feel, where do you see the holes, what are the blind spots, where do the truly brilliant moments hide... And I'm not speaking only about series when I say this, it could be single images that suddenly seem to come together, or even disjointed fragments that do very well on their own, and even better when viewed for what they are.

The art of coming closer and looking inside has been the topic of many conversations, but what about the art of going away?

Ambarin Afsar

ambarin.afsar@betterphotography.in / Instagram: @batsaboutcats



Nirvair Singh

Untitled

by Nirvair Singh

Amit Mehra speaks about being discerning about sharing one's images on social media

Turn to page 70

Prashanth Vishwanathan on his diverse images of India's landscapes and peplescapes—'Dynamic Storytelling'

Turn to page 64

Cover photograph by Prashanth Vishwanathan

“

My favorite thing is to go where I've never been.

”

DIANE ARBUS

Diane Arbus was an American photographer who believed a camera could be “a little bit cold, a little bit harsh”, but that its scrutiny revealed the truth—the difference between what people wanted others to see, and what they really did see: the flaws.



Xiaomi Mi 4 (387)

Make Way for Mi!

Supriya Joshi puts Xiaomi's latest flagship, the Mi 4, to the test to see if the latest iteration of the Mi series is just as good as its predecessors.

Xiaomi was on an unstoppable rampage to reach the top of the budget Android phone market, and guess what? With 61 million phones sold, and a valuation of 45 billion, it sure has won. The launch of the Mi 4 speaks of things yet to come.

What's New?

The phone features a 2.5GHz quad-core Snapdragon 801 processor with 3GB RAM, so it's pretty fast. The memory, however, is not expandable and it comes in two versions, 16GB and 64GB. At the time of its launch, only the 16GB version was released

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⚡ The AF and shooting speed of the Mi 4 is blazing fast, so you don't have to worry about missing the moment.





🔊 The phone has an Audio mode as well, which will make a picture as soon as it hears an audible command like 'Shoot' or 'Say Cheese'. It was almost always effective.

in India, which is what we tested. The Mi 4 features a 13MP 1/3inch Sony-made sensor with an f/1.8 aperture. Like the Mi 3 before it, the phone also features an Auto mode, allowing you to control White Balance, Focus, Exposure Time (1sec–1/1000sec) and ISO (ISO 100–3200). Maybe I'm expecting too much, but a RAW mode should have been the next logical step for Xiaomi. Hopefully we'll see one in the next flagship.

Another new feature introduced in the phone is a Refocus mode, which recreates what the Lytro camera does by allowing you to choose different points of focus in the image. Plus, you can now make 4k video at 30fps as well.

FUN APPS TO TRY

BlendPic is a free image editing app for Android operating systems. With this app, you can make double exposures by blending two photographs together. The transparency is easily adjustable and it comes with several presets as well. Plus, the images can instantly be shared on any social media network of your choice.

Something Borrowed?

You can now also adjust the exposure on the fly, simply by tapping the screen and moving your thumb forward and backward in a circular motion. The same feature can be seen in Apple devices running iOS 8. Was Xiaomi going for the poor man's iPhone with this version of the Mi?

What's My Age Again?

The Mi 4 features an 8MP front-facing camera, which is quite nice. However, by default, the phone displays what it thinks is



All photographs by Supriya Joshi

your age and sex when you are shooting a selfie. I happen to be a 50-year-old man!

Hot and Cold

The camera performance of the Mi 4 is a mixed bag. In bright sunlight, the highlights would be completely blown out. The images were also very saturated. I found this quite strange, as we were quite pleased with the image quality of the Mi 3. The video quality, on the other hand, was quite good.

As a whole, the Xiaomi Mi 4 is a good phone, but an average shooter. It is priced at Rs. 19,999, but I'd still prefer the image quality of the much-cheaper Xiaomi Redmi 1s over it. 📷

🔊 You can release the shutter by pressing the volume button, which is especially useful when you're shooting vertical frames.

AT A GLANCE

SPECIFICATIONS	13MP, f/1.8 lens, 8MP front camera, 16GB inbuilt memory, 2.5GHz quad-core Snapdragon 801 processor, 3GB RAM, 4k video, Rs. 19,999 for 16GB version
WHAT WE LIKE	Fantastic design, Manual mode, speedy
WHAT WE DISLIKE	Non expandable memory, average image quality
WHY BUY IT?	It is one of the better Android phones around and its processing power packs a considerable amount of punch

FINAL RATINGS

86%

CAMERA FEATURES RAW	Manual mode, 8MP front camera, refocus mode	23/25
IMAGE QUALITY	Average image quality, tendency to blow out highlights	23/30
VIDEO QUALITY	4k video at 30fps	13/15
HANDLING	Sturdy phone, easy to operate with one hand	13/15
SPEED & RESPONSIVENESS	Very quick, no shutter lag	14/15

Oppo R5 (R8106)

Almost There, But Not Quite

Conchita Fernandes puts the Oppo R5 to the test, and finds out if the phone's camera is as sleek and sophisticated as the rest of the package.



60

🔴 The phone produced colours quite accurately. I barely had to use external apps to tweak the images, except for maybe crop them.

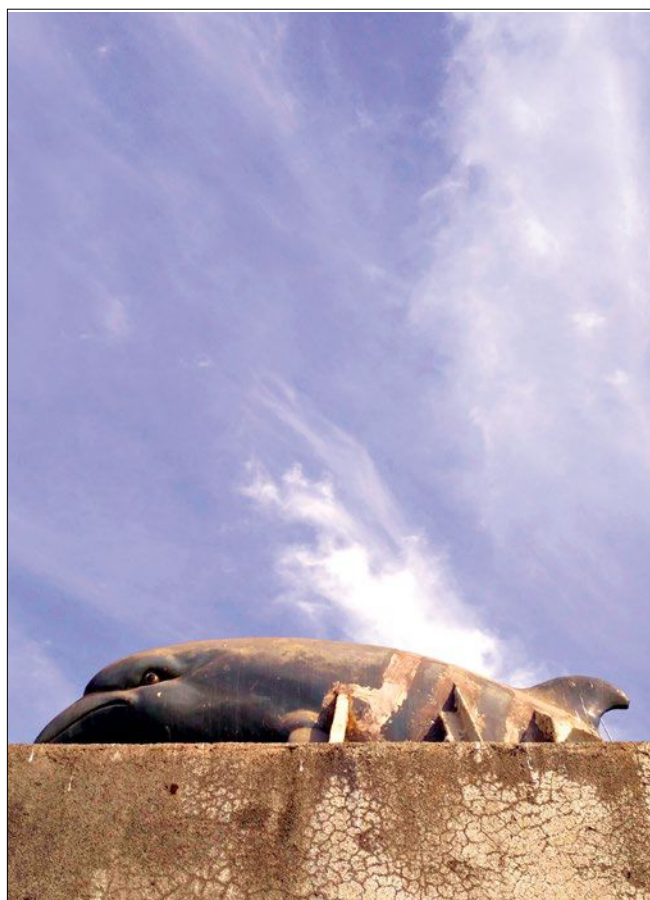
The first time that I held the Oppo R5 in my hand, I couldn't believe how incredibly slim it was! Measuring 4.85mm in thickness, it is the company's slimmest smartphone. Design-wise too, it is quite a sleek beauty to hold and carry around, and even comes with its own transparent protective case. This was just about enough to get me excited to see how the R5's camera would fare.

Covering the Photographer's Needs

The phone has a 13MP rear camera with an f/2 lens, and a 5MP front-facing camera. The first place I took it to was the beach, and it did not take me long to realise what a beautiful shooter it was. I saw that the edges of my subjects were crisp and sharp, and thankfully did not have posterised details that some cameraphones are notorious for!

Also, at 20fps in the Burst mode, the phone is quite quick at writing 13MP JPEGs





➦ Just after spending an hour shooting with the phone, I saw how vibrantly it interpreted skies, giving it an almost dreamy feel. However, I do wish it would handle highlights better.

and retaining the dynamism of the subject. The metering, on the other hand, is not so perfect and on sunny days, the camera tends to create blown-out highlights.

Emulating the Find 7

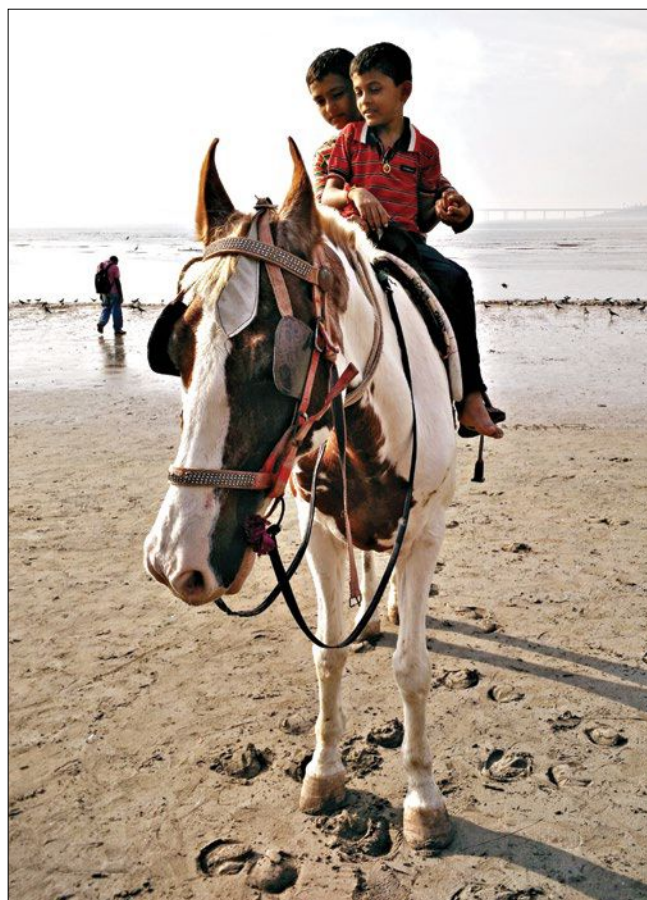
The R5 uses the same 1/3.06-inch Sony Exmor CMOS sensor as the Find 7 and the Find 7a and shoots 25MB RAW files in the DNG format. It takes just as long as the Find 7 did to process RAW files (4–5sec). It also has the same Ultra HD mode which lets you create 50MP photos.

But what the R5 has that the Find 7 does not is the exposure compensation option. Other features include Audio Photo, GIF, Double Exposure, After Focus, and the other usual suspects. Also, the R5 lets you customise your camera palette to the features that you're most likely to use.

Another new addition was the VOOC charging technology, which charges the phone to 100% in less than an hour! This was great because its battery depleted quick, after using it to shoot and edit images continuously.

Missing the Crucial Mark

On the whole, the Oppo R5 has not been a let down photographically.



All photographs by Conchita Fernandes

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➦ I was quite pleased with the R5's autofocus speed, which was always quick and responsive.

However, feature-wise it is not all that different from the Find 7, with the exception that it does not have 4K video and expandable storage.

I find it quite strange actually, that a phone which offers RAW does not have expandable memory, and hence I cannot help but feel that its Rs. 29,999 price tag to be on the steeper side. This is keeping in mind that the OnePlus One has a RAW mode, 64GB memory, 4K video, and is much cheaper.

Unfortunately, the R5's good camera performance and features are simply not enough to give it an edge. In conclusion, if your primary aim is photography then you should look elsewhere. 📷

AT A GLANCE

SPECIFICATIONS	13MP, f/2 lens, 5MP front camera, 16GB inbuilt memory, Android 4.4.4, RAW mode, 2GB RAM, Qualcomm 1.5GHz processor, LED flash, Rs. 29,999
WHAT WE LIKE	VOOC technology, good AF, RAW shooting capability
WHAT WE DISLIKE	Non-expandable memory, lack of 4K video option
WHY BUY IT?	If you're an Oppo fan who does not have the budget for the N3 or even the Find 7, then this one's for you

FINAL RATINGS

80%

CAMERA FEATURES	50MP Ultra HD mode, the same sensor as the Find 7	22/25
IMAGE QUALITY	Good colour reproduction, decent low light image quality	25/30
VIDEO QUALITY	1080p at 60fps, 720p at 120fps	11/15
HANDLING	Its slippery metal exterior does not feel sturdy when held	11/15
SPEED & RESPONSIVENESS	Slow RAW processing speed	11/15

INSTAFOLLOW NOW

Evolution is a central theme in National Geographic photographer Robert Clark's (@robertclarkphoto) photographs. His Instagram is filled with interesting photos of the human brain, portraits of dogs and birds and perfectly preserved human mummies.

🔗 The best part about making light trails handheld is that other distracting details get eliminated on their own.
Shot with: Oppo N1

Invest in a Gorillapod or a lightweight, yet sturdy tripod so that you can mount your cellphone on it and effectively do away with unwanted shake.

Slow it Down

Ambarin Afsar tells you how to make slightly crazy, slightly trippy long exposures using your good ol' cellphone.

When light levels fall, the first thing you get worried about is the shaky pictures that your cellphone camera will end up making.

Have you ever thought of using such slow shutterspeeds to your advantage?

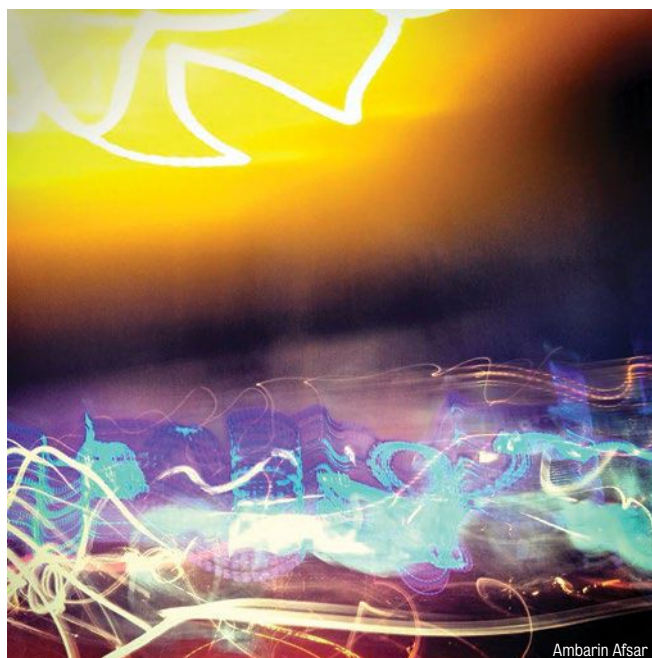
Explore the Inbuilt Camera App

First things first, check whether the native camera app allows you to control the shutterspeed in any manner. Can you reduce the ISO value to base level? Doing so will give you a slow shutterspeed

in low light. Does your phone have a specific Night exposure mode that either gives you a preset long exposure, or gives you control over long exposures? If it does, your battle is half won.

Look for Third Party Apps

Camera FV-5, a paid Android app, allows you to control variables like shutterspeed and ISO, while apps like Slow Shutter Cam (iOS), Lightbomber (iOS) are dedicated to long exposures. While a great number of these apps are paid, it is a nominal amount (Rs. 50–200, depending on whether you



➤ Street lights combined with the bustling city that is moving past you in a speeding vehicle, can help you capture electrifying streaks.

Shot with: Oppo N1

buy the app during discount season) and completely worth all the added control.

Focusing Issues

If you have trouble focusing, look for pinpricks of light in the landscape, or areas of the frame that are contrasty. Camera FV-5 will also allow you focus manually.



Looking for Subjects

Tangled shadows on the wall, traffic lights, neon signboards, slow sync flash at parties where people are dancing, fairy lights and other decorative fixtures at festival processions and weddings, are all examples of the kind of subjects you can choose to make long exposures of.

➤ The N1 has a rotating camera, so you can tilt it and steady the phone against a railing or a wall to get a sharp, well-exposed image of a dimly lit area such as this facade.

Shot with: Oppo N1

You can make long exposures in the day as well. Dedicated apps usually achieve one image from a composite of anywhere between 3–200 images. This ensures reasonably well exposed images.



Natasha Desai

➤ While this looks like a slow sync flash, nighttime image of a boy on a swing, it has actually been shot on an extremely overcast afternoon.

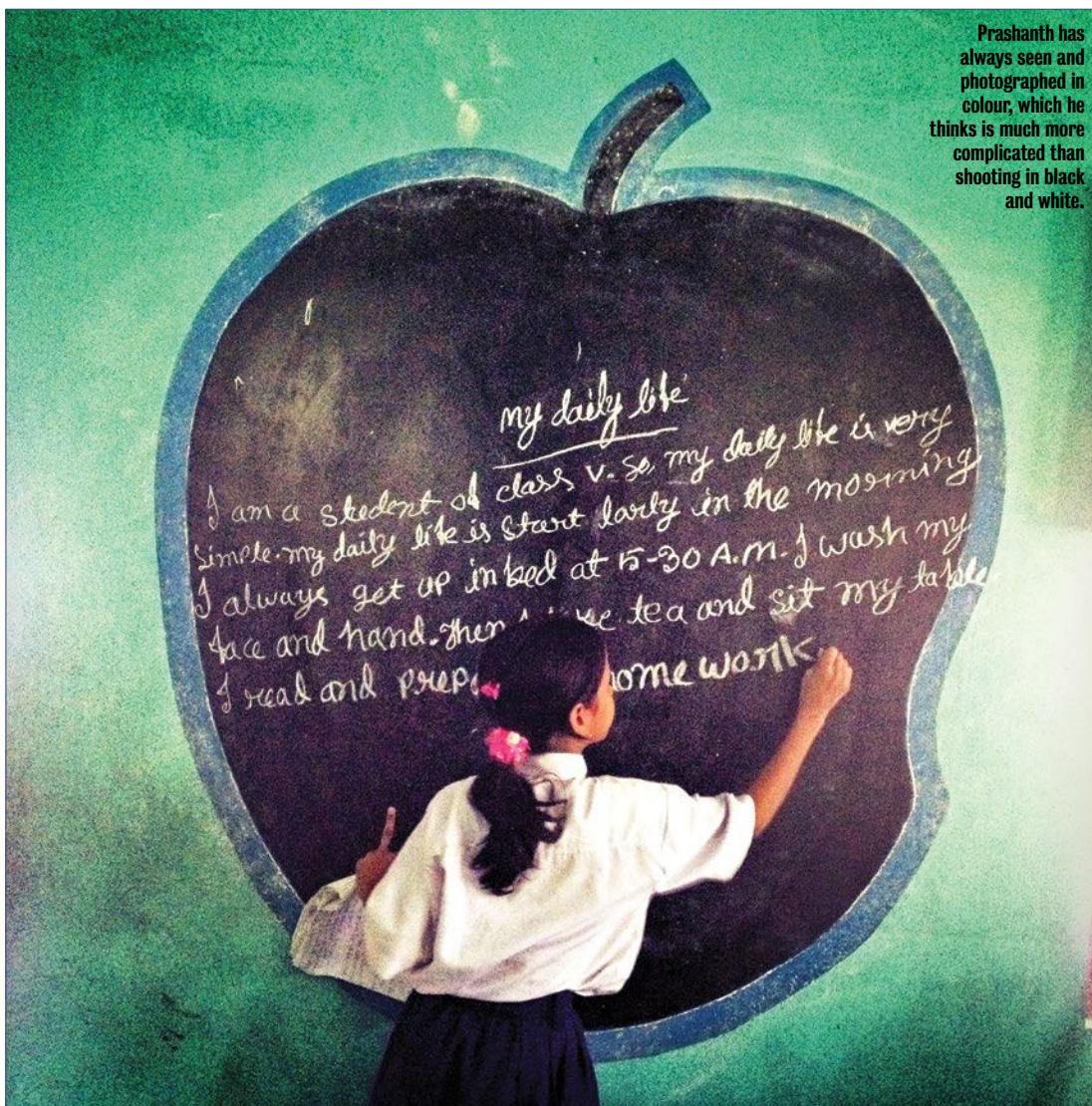
Shot with: Apple iPhone 4s



Prashanth Vishwanathan

- His work focuses on documentary photography and includes events, weddings, political activism, visual sociology and news photojournalism.
- Some of his favourite movies are *Turtles Can Fly*, *City of God* and *Taxi Driver*.
- He is currently reading books by Reza Aslan, P Sainath and Amartya Sen.
- His all-time favourite television series are *Twin Peaks*, *The X-Files* and *Breaking Bad*.

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Prashanth has always been seen and photographed in colour, which he thinks is much more complicated than shooting in black and white.

Dynamic Storytelling

While in conversation with Prashanth Vishwanathan, Conchita Fernandes finds out how his images breathe life into the different vistas of India.

Sometimes, the best things in life come in the form of unexpected packages. You don't actively seek it, but the moment eventually comes around and envelops you. Prashanth Vishwanathan too, shares a similar story.

In 2006, when he was interning in the Sales department at *Reuters*, he happened to stumble upon the agency's photography unit. He describes the moment as being mesmerised by all the photographs in front of him.

Learning From the Best

Later, at the end of the internship, Prashanth decided to take a bold step. Instead of looking for a job, he picked up a camera.

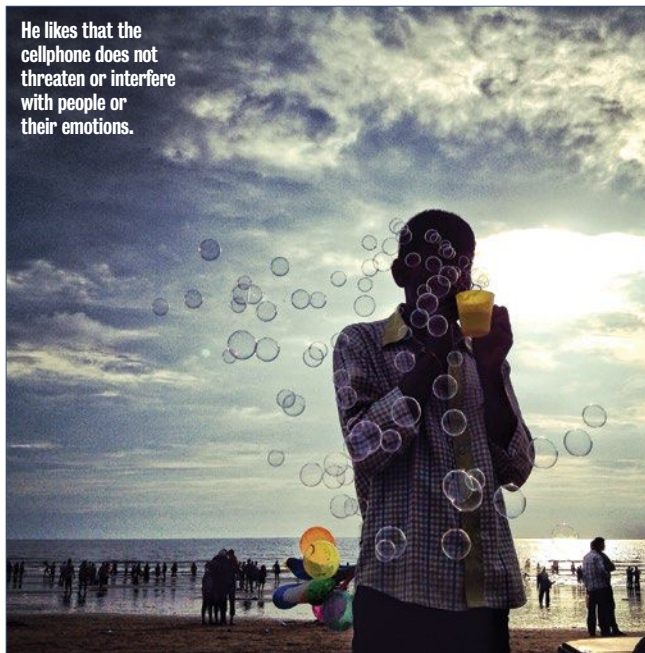
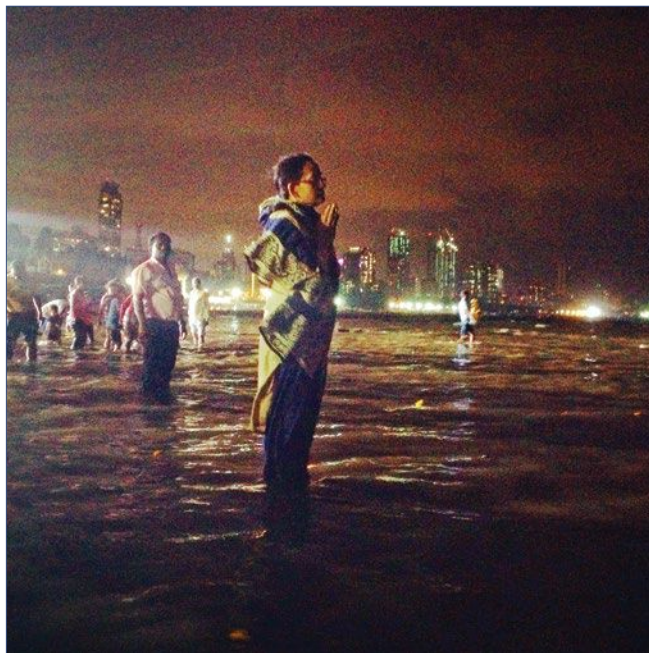
He realised the importance of learning from the best early on, and so, he made sure to attend workshops by the likes of David Alan Harvey and Swapan Parekh. He also trained under several senior photographers like Arko Datta, and it wasn't long before he realised that this was the profession for him. "18 months ▶

FIND PRASHANTH HERE!

- Instagram: @prashanthvishwanathan
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/WanderingVision
- Website: www.prashanthvishwanathan.com

INSTAFOLLOW NOW

Andrea Duclos (@ohdeardrea) gives us a colourful look at her life in her warm and vibrant home in South Florida, which she shares with her daughter Marlowe.



He likes that the cellphone does not threaten or interfere with people or their emotions.

➡ According to him, a memorable photograph is one that freezes the ever fleeting moment, which is then chiselled with an artistic eye, and later filtered through the experiences and motivations of the photographer.

later, I joined as a stringer for *Reuters* wire service, and have been freelancing since then," he says. Apart from this, he also

actively contributes to *Time*, *Newsweek*, *The New York Times*, *International Herald Tribune* and several other publications. ➡



➡ Prashanth thinks that the differences between street and documentary photography should be left to definitions in a dictionary. One does not need to ponder too much about the meaning of these terms. "On field, I am telling stories through the lens of my understanding and experience," he says.



If given the option to choose between working on a series or a single image, Prashanth would prefer the latter.

Tips on Making Everyday Photographs of Your City

- **Be Observant:** Sometimes in the most chaotic atmosphere, one can find infinite solitude. It is only a matter of seeing the connections right in front of you.
- **Experiment as Much as Possible:** Just because they are street photographs, it does not mean that you cannot experiment with forms that are abstract and surreal.
- **Find Humour in the Everyday:** The street is dynamic and so, there is always something funny happening all the time. Make sure that you're there to capture it.

His Third Eye

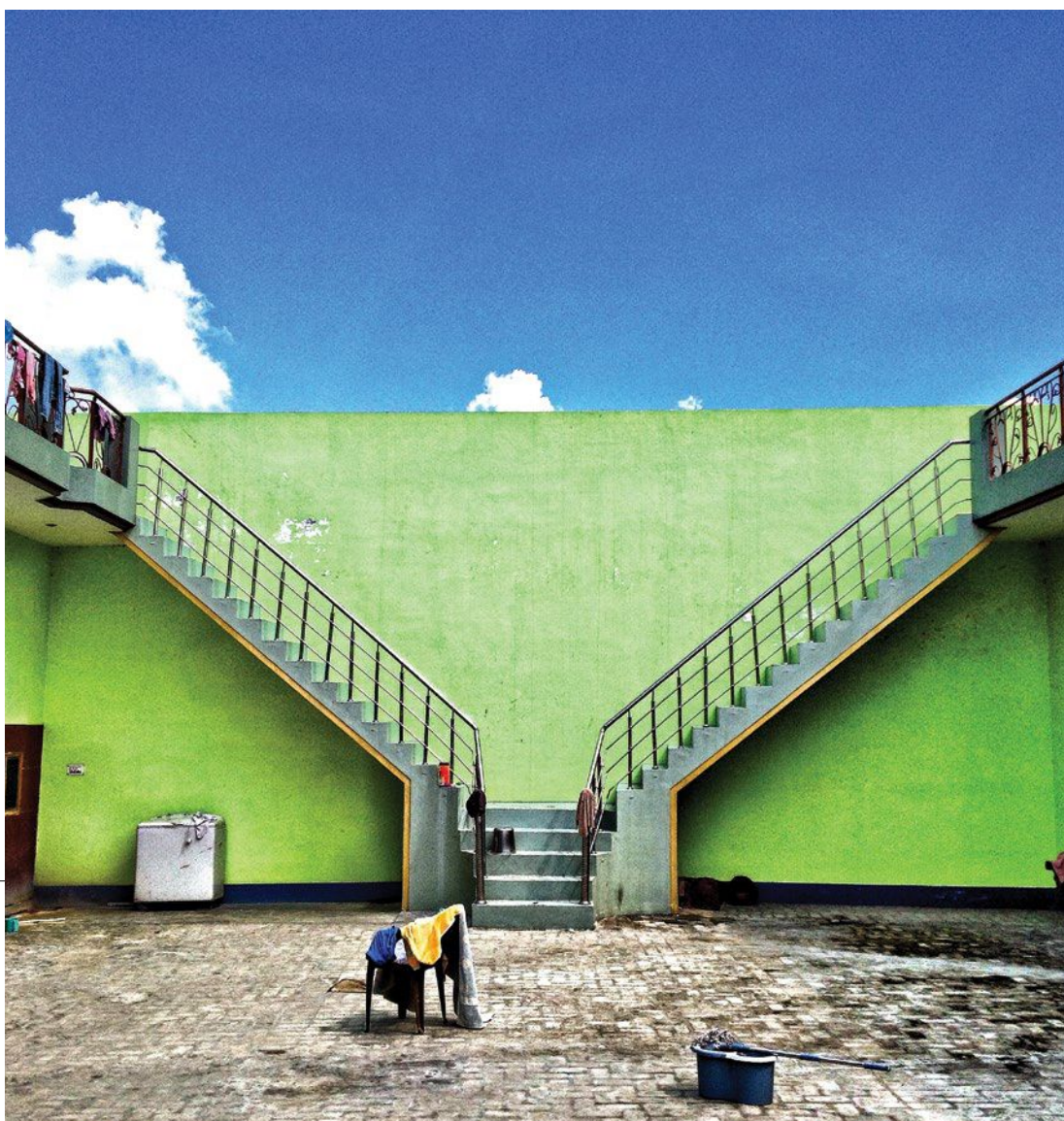
When he is not shooting for assignments, Prashanth prefers documenting the daily back and forth of life in the various cities in India. Since he travels 10–15 days a month, he finds himself drawn towards the unexpectedness of everyday life.

The cellphone, he mentions, allows him to easily merge with the crowd. "As a

"When I started out, I really admired the work of Robert Capa and Henri Cartier-Bresson. But as my journey progressed, I discovered the works of Elliott Erwitt, James Nachtwey, Sebastião Salgado, and others. They have all influenced my work and how I shoot and. Among the Indian masters, I am deeply in love with the colour work of Raghubhir Singh."



⊕ When asked whether he likes to photograph everything around him, he says, "I am generally photographing all the time with my eyes. When I take out my camera, be it the DSLR or cellphone, the edges of the frame have already started forming in my mind."

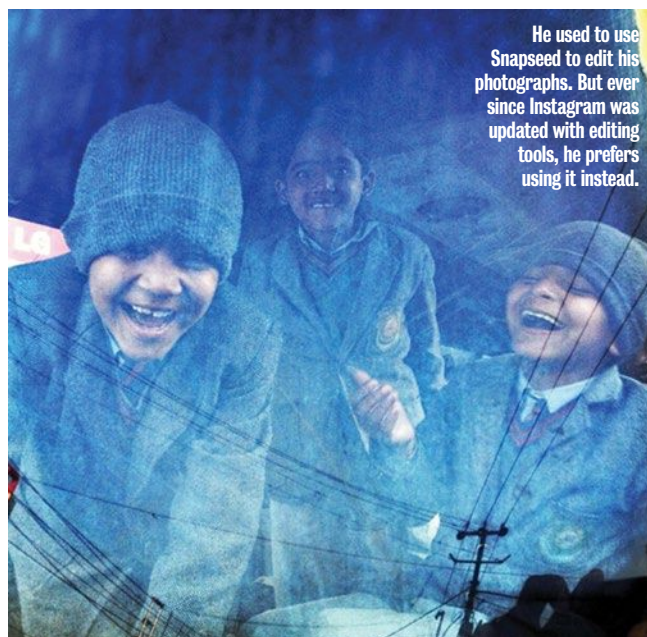


➔ He is of the opinion that the content or the subject is the most important aspect of the image. On the other hand, the form and the technique should be hidden. Nevertheless, a good balance of both is necessary.

street photographer and a photojournalist, one wishes to be invisible so as not to disturb the subjects and the surroundings. Cellphones are small and people don't take you seriously. Fortunately, over the years, the quality of the camera on the device has improved drastically. So much so, that today, I carry my phone everywhere and shoot with it even on professional assignments."

Planting the Seed

However, his interest in photography did not just spur from a chance encounter. His childhood had a lot to do with the way he makes pictures today. When asked how, he chose to quote Ansel Adams, "You don't make a photograph just with a camera. You bring to the act of photography all the pictures you have seen, the books you have read, the music you have heard and the people you have loved." To this he



He used to use Snapseed to edit his photographs. But ever since Instagram was updated with editing tools, he prefers using it instead.



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“One should not avoid clichés. Shoot as much of it as you can, and get them out of your system. This will help you grow as a photographer.”

adds, “I have always been interested in the economic divide of man, his interaction with nature, and his disregard for human rights in the quest for development. I have to credit the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, for instilling in me the principles of equality and harmony.”

Priceless Advice

One thing that Prashanth cherishes the most is a piece of advice given to him by Arko Datta, “While walking on the street, when you turn around and look at something

twice, know that there is a potential there for a photograph.” And so, he keeps his eyes peeled for the faintest presence of irony, satire, humour, love or mystery, on the street.

A Little of Everything

What is really discernible about his cellphone work is its simplicity. Keeping in mind what he does for a living, I like that his pictures don’t scream of the run-of-the-mill journalistic work that most of us are used to seeing. In fact, there is a certain sobriety to his pictures, which do not intend to shock

➤ Prashanth uses the iPhone to shoot his cellphone work. Contrary to what most people say about the device not being important, he thinks that the phone matters, especially when it has to do with the final printing of images.

or provoke their viewers. Adding to this, his own commentary on the images, either in the form of interesting anecdotes or poetic verses, wraps it up perfectly.

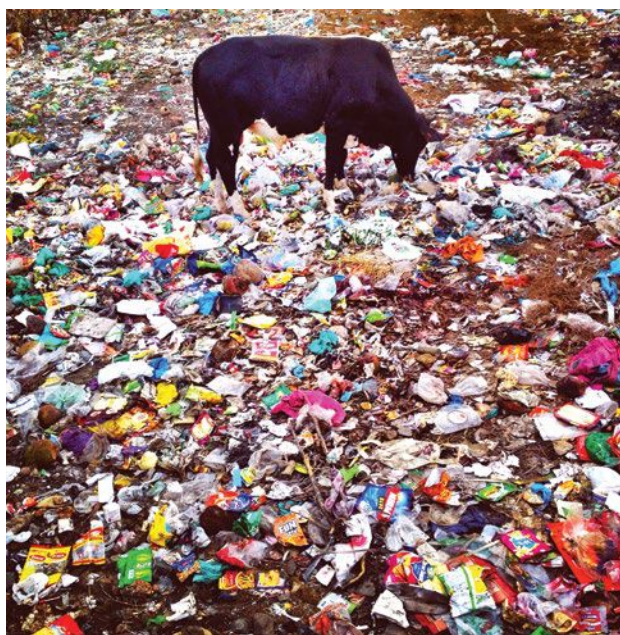
Accelerating Upward

In a span of almost a decade, Prashanth has traversed several exciting roads. In 2008, his photograph of the Mumbai attacks appeared on the cover of *Newsweek*

magazine, a huge accomplishment for someone who just started out.

However, as far as perfecting his style is concerned, he still thinks that he has a long way to go. "In the beginning, I took a while to understand what is it that I like to shoot, and shoot it well. The journey still continues, and I am still figuring out my subjects and my style. But I think I have progressed a bit in the journey" ■

⬇ He does not have a favourite photograph. Instead, he leaves me with a quote by Imogen Cunningham, "Which of my photographs is my favourite? The one I'm going to take tomorrow."





Amit Mehra


On Slowing Down...



Amit Mehra

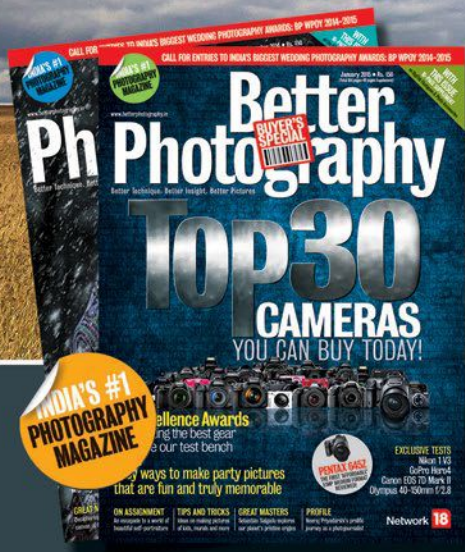
Last month, I deleted the Facebook app from my phone and decided to use it only when I'm sitting on a desktop. Technology tends to make slaves of us and it gets tempting to keep scrolling through the News Feed. Instead of checking it incessantly, I decided to push myself to look for images, and shoot.

Earlier, we would send our friends a picture postcard to tell them about our travels. Facebook and Instagram uploads are the new picture postcards. But there is a fine line between putting up a casual picture as a status update and showcasing one's serious photography. After all, every image uploaded is a statement of who we are, and

can change the way our vision is perceived. One has to consider flow of thought, context and relevance. Like this image, which I shot and uploaded last spring in Kashmir, and I am using it for this diary now that spring has returned. Also, if one plans to publish the photos in a book, a magazine or an exhibition, how much of the work should one expose? For me, it's like playing a tough game of cards, in deciding what images to reveal, when, and which ones to hold back. Social media is an incredible platform to discover and share new photos, but at a time when photography seems to be in a hurry, it's probably best to slow down. 

Constantly balancing the worlds of commercial and documentary photography, Amit describes himself saying, "I'm like an octopus who likes to deal with different things at the same time. You can call me a schizophrenic photographer." The moments in this monthly diary are excerpts from his ongoing work titled 'Roznaama'.

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READERS' GALLERY

Better Cellphone Photography's readers were challenged to capture the magic of low light photography in this month's contest.

Presented by



Winner



☛ Hanging by a Thread

Vijay Karthick, Coimbatore

What made me shoot this: I was fascinated by how the light bulb illuminated the spider and the dense mass of web that it clung to.

What I learnt: I understood the significance of metering by shooting in a tricky lighting situation like this.

Shot with: Xiaomi Mi 3

☛ Different Shades of Twilight

Partha Pratim Saikia,
North Lakhimpur

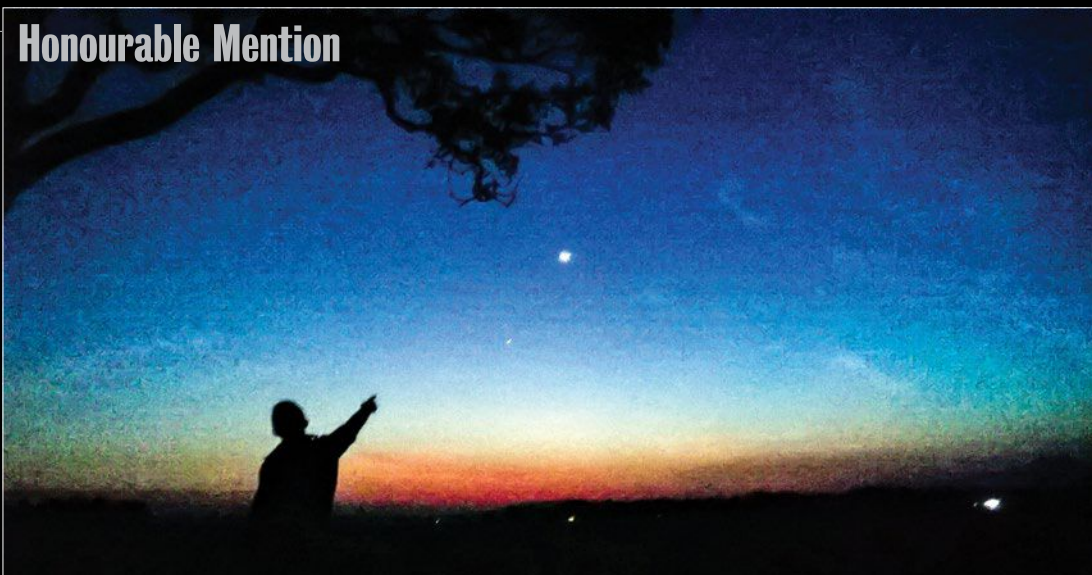
What made me shoot this: There is a belief in my community that one should not remain empty-handed when viewing the new crescent moon. When I saw this man pointing at the sky, I knew that it was a good omen, and had to shoot the image.

What I learnt:

Not all imperfections are bad. Like, the noise in the image lends to the overall beauty of the photograph.

Shot with: Nokia Lumia 520

Honourable Mention



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*Actual colour of the Powerbank may vary

Honourable Mention



At the End of the Day...

Deepak Chauhan, Haridwar

What made me shoot this:

I was attracted to the blue and yellow tones in the photograph.

What I learnt: It is never easy working with tricky lighting. This is why I experimented with different shutterspeeds and ISO settings, in order to get the perfect exposure.

Shot with: Nokia Lumia 1020



Honourable Mention

The Rising Sun

Husain Ujjainwala, Mumbai

What made me shoot this:

A friend and I decided to visit Kalamb Beach in Nalasopara to make a images of light painting using steel wool.

What I learnt: When making such photographs, safety is very important. It can be dangerous if performed near inflammable objects.

Shot with: Nokia Lumia 1020

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The Lighter Side of Life

Supriya Joshi encourages you to look at the world through rose-tinted glasses, and embrace life's funny moments by employing humour in your images.

76 **As you shoot, crack a joke or tell a funny story to make your subject laugh. Laughter elicits laughter, which your viewers will enjoy when they see your images.**

Back in 2008, the late Heath Ledger delivered an unforgettable dialogue as The Joker in the movie *The Dark Knight*. "Why so serious?" he asked, giving the viewers a catchphrase which is often used for people who may be feeling solemn. So, as photographers reading this, today I ask you, why so serious?

As a medium, humour is just as effective as getting your message across. Why shy away from it? The word 'funny' is subjective, but your interpretation of it is what will make your photos unique.

Capturing a Memory

Think about the last time you had a really good laugh, and there is a strong chance that the memory is from a time you spent with your close ones. The next time there is a gathering of your friends or family, make lots of photos. Make your subjects enact silly poses, wear costumes and hold props. Importantly, remember to get in the photos yourself as well! The activity may seem frivolous today, but 10 years down the line, revisiting these photos will make you smile... which is photography's ultimate purpose, isn't it? ▶

Find inspiration from what you think is funny. A good joke can just as easily translate to your images as well.



Vivek Nigam

ON ASSIGNMENT

The Way of the Road

A unique way of capturing a rural bus route

84



ON ASSIGNMENT

The Little Women

Combining paper dolls and quaint locations

88



TIPS & TRICKS

Learn to shoot Holi, concerts and long exposures of water

92



Everyday issues become easier to deal with if you can laugh at them. It wouldn't make the problem go away, but at least you can momentarily feel better about life.

S L Shanthkumar

കളിയും ചിരിയും നിറഞ്ഞ ഈ അഗ്രഹാരത്തെരുവ്
എന്നെ ഓർത്തുമോ...?

ശ്രീലക്ഷ്മി
ക്രിയേഷൻസ്



Saji Antony

Often, capturing the unexpected is what adds humour to your images. Keep a sharp eye out for such moments.

A Means of Satire

What is satire, but a means to humourously look at our society for what it truly is? Everyday life and its various flavours can be represented best with the use of humour in photography. The contrasts of various cultures in big metropolises and funny posters juxtaposed with serious surroundings are just some of the potential

subjects you can find humour in. You could also combine stray animals with movie posters or signboards for comic relief!

Don't Force it!

The most important thing about trying to be funny is to also be respectful of the subject. Remember that your goal is to laugh with the subject, not at it.

The gear you use is not important. You can create a humorous photo story with a 2MP camera as well.



Saji Antony

Explore various vantage points, until you find the frame that will look comical enough.

You don't need to be a funny person to shoot funny pictures. Life is filled with humour as it is... your only job is to recognise and capture those amusing moments.

🕒 **Smaller funny moments are often ignored, because we seem them almost every day. Yet, reminding your viewers of them is what makes the photo stand out.**

Think twice before you release the shutter... if you are having second thoughts about how your frame will be perceived by others, or if the particular photo seems to be in bad taste, don't shoot, as you could get into trouble or even hurt someone. Just remember that you will find better opportunities at another time.

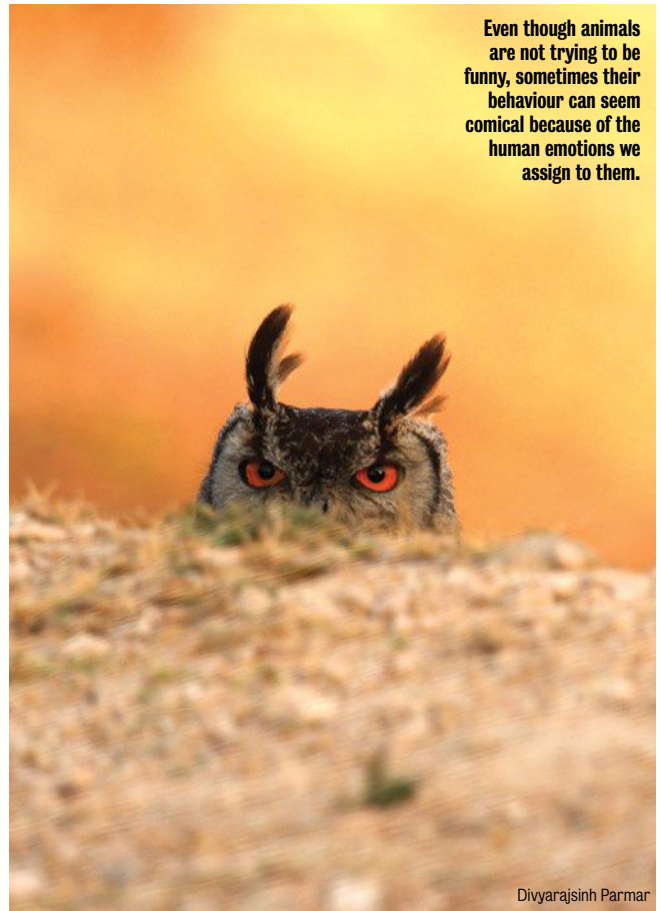
...But Don't Let Go Either!

Just like any genre of photography, this one takes a lot of patience as well, perhaps more so. There will be many times that you will find a potentially humorous moment, lacking an element that would just elevate the photo if it were present in it. So, wait it out as much as you can. For instance, your photo of a gorgeous sunset at the beach could be made even better with let's say, a little girl walking her pet dog, who is wearing a costume.

Every Idea Counts

Don't ever let go of a concept, despite how over the top or inexecutable you think it ▶

Even though animals are not trying to be funny, sometimes their behaviour can seem comical because of the human emotions we assign to them.



Divyarajsinh Parmar



SHAMAX

Olivia Daas



All photographs by Supriya Joshi



Shaitan Singh Chouhan

🔴 Laugh with your subjects. It is, after all, the most recognised human emotion.

is. Take a look at Sacha Goldberger's series *Super Mamika*, where he has immortalised his grandmother in the form of a superhero or Dave Engledow's *World's Best Father*, which shows him with his daughter in hilarious moments. If you have a funny photo idea in mind, just go forth and shoot it, without overthinking it.

Just Have Fun!

Not every moment warrants a funny photograph. However, with just by a slight shift in your perspective, you can find that even the most serious situations will house a light-hearted moment. Some of the most memorable images have come from photographers who have stepped out of the

🔴 Such moments are serendipitous. If you're lucky, and you look hard enough, you will find them too.

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🔴 This is a snippet from my personal series, *The Deadpan Diaries*, which follows my deadpan sister on her various adventures. Sometimes funny ideas will come to you on the fly... don't let go of them! You can end up with a very strong series.



Anjan Kumar Kundu

If you are at a loss for subjects, start with your family. There will always be a relative who makes you smile.




Rajiv Kumar Solanki

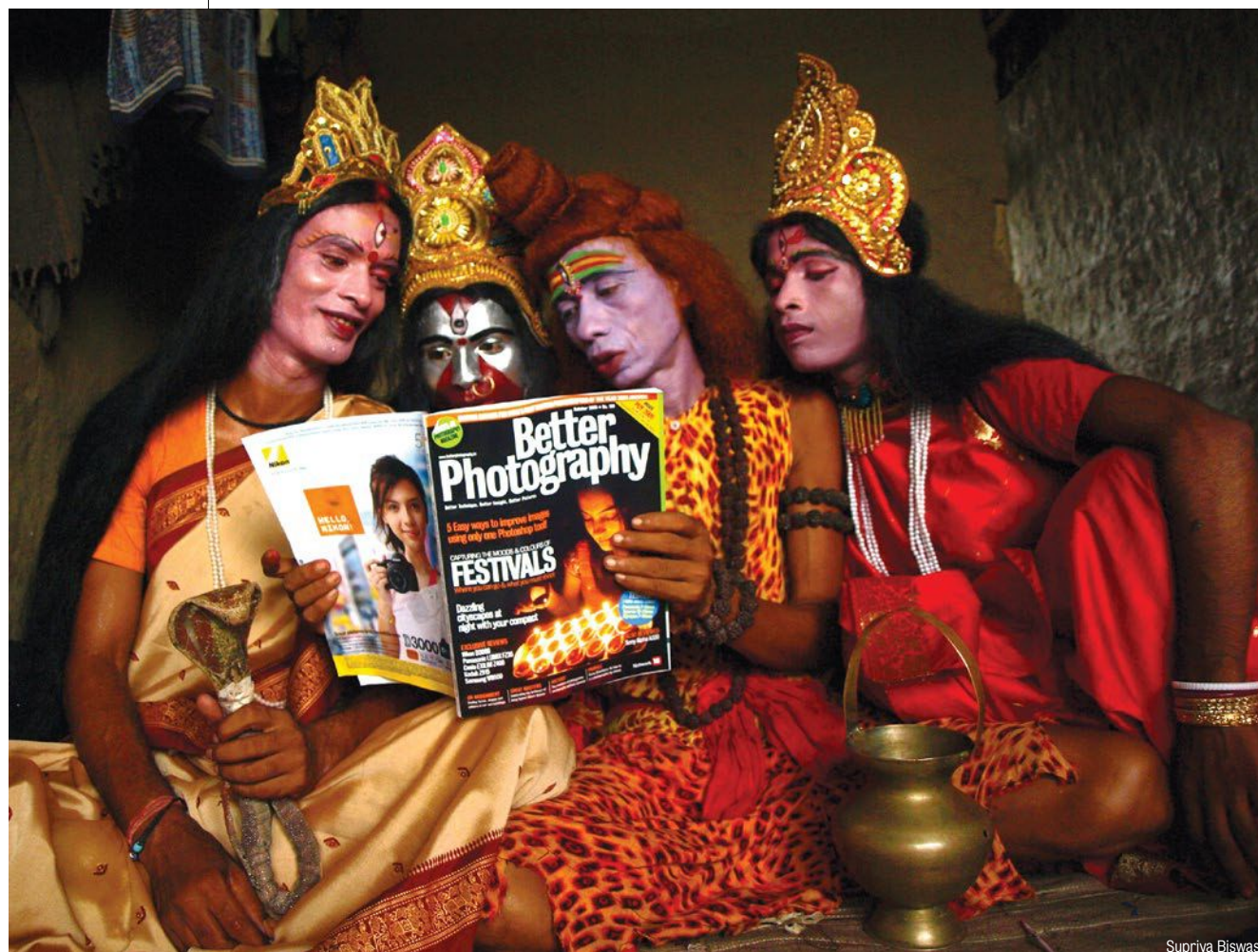
Children are just inherently funny, so you don't even need to guide them or ask them to pose. They will provide you with humorous moments without you even asking.

If we might be so cheeky, you should subscribe to our magazine too!

mould of expectation and have presented issues in a lighthearted manner.

Approaching photography with a dash of humour is just having fun with it. If you're

having a good time when you are making pictures, and if you can get your message across, even if it is satirical in nature, the resulting images can be quite powerful. 



Supriya Biswas

Better Photography

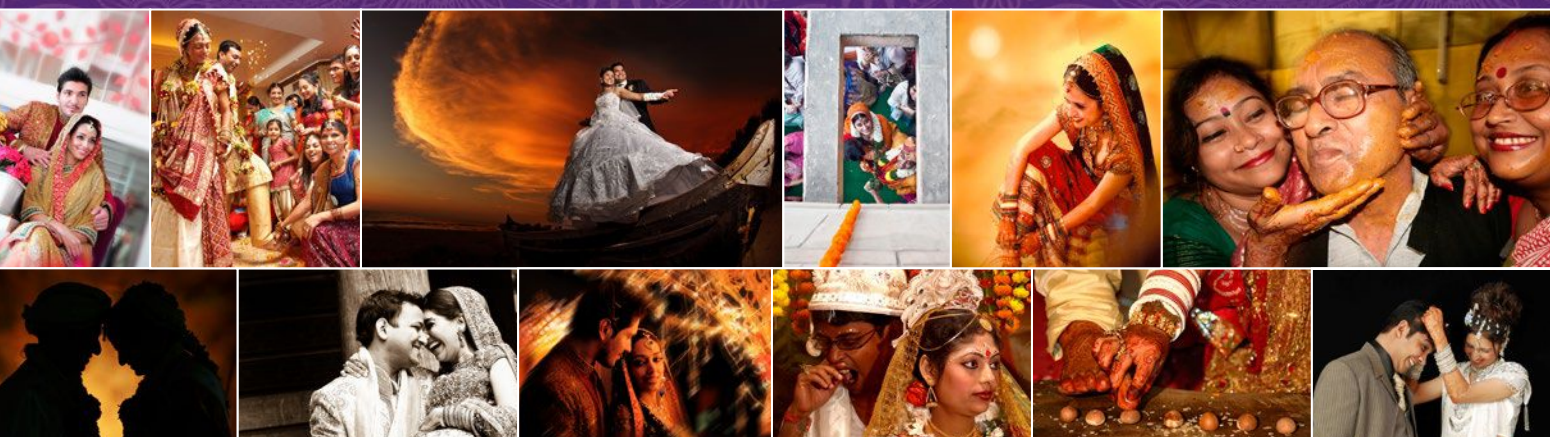
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From previous projects I learned to combine my knowledge of different processes with the native visual technology of the place I wished to document. I was eager to use these learnings in this project.

ON ASSIGNMENT

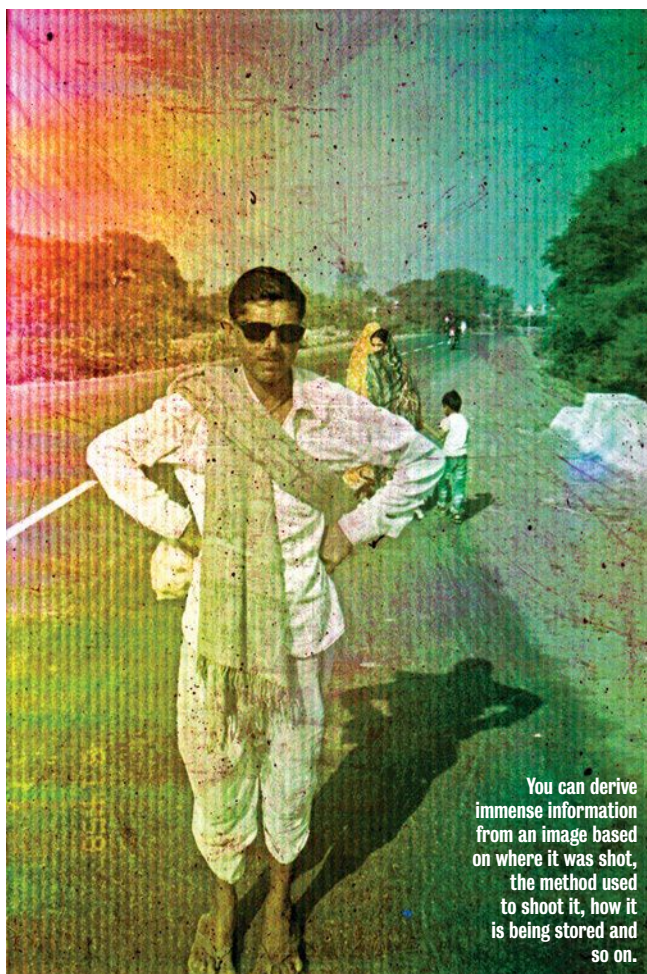
The Way of the Road

Fabien Charuau creates a long map of the road he travelled on in rural Rajasthan, using only locally available equipment and technology.

During a three-week artist residency in the village of Partapur, Rajasthan, I was asked to build my project on the bus that runs through the village and the route it follows. While the bus itself did not interest me much, I found myself drawn to the road that the bus travels on.

My Perspective

If you look at photography over the ages, it has a long history of interactions with the road. My challenge was to make my project different. After some thought, I decided that I would follow the 36km long road and stop at every one kilometer mark to document what I saw.



You can derive immense information from an image based on where it was shot, the method used to shoot it, how it is being stored and so on.

My Assignment

Description

I wanted to explore the only route running through a tiny village in a unique way. My aim was to gather as much information from there as possible.

Duration

Three weeks

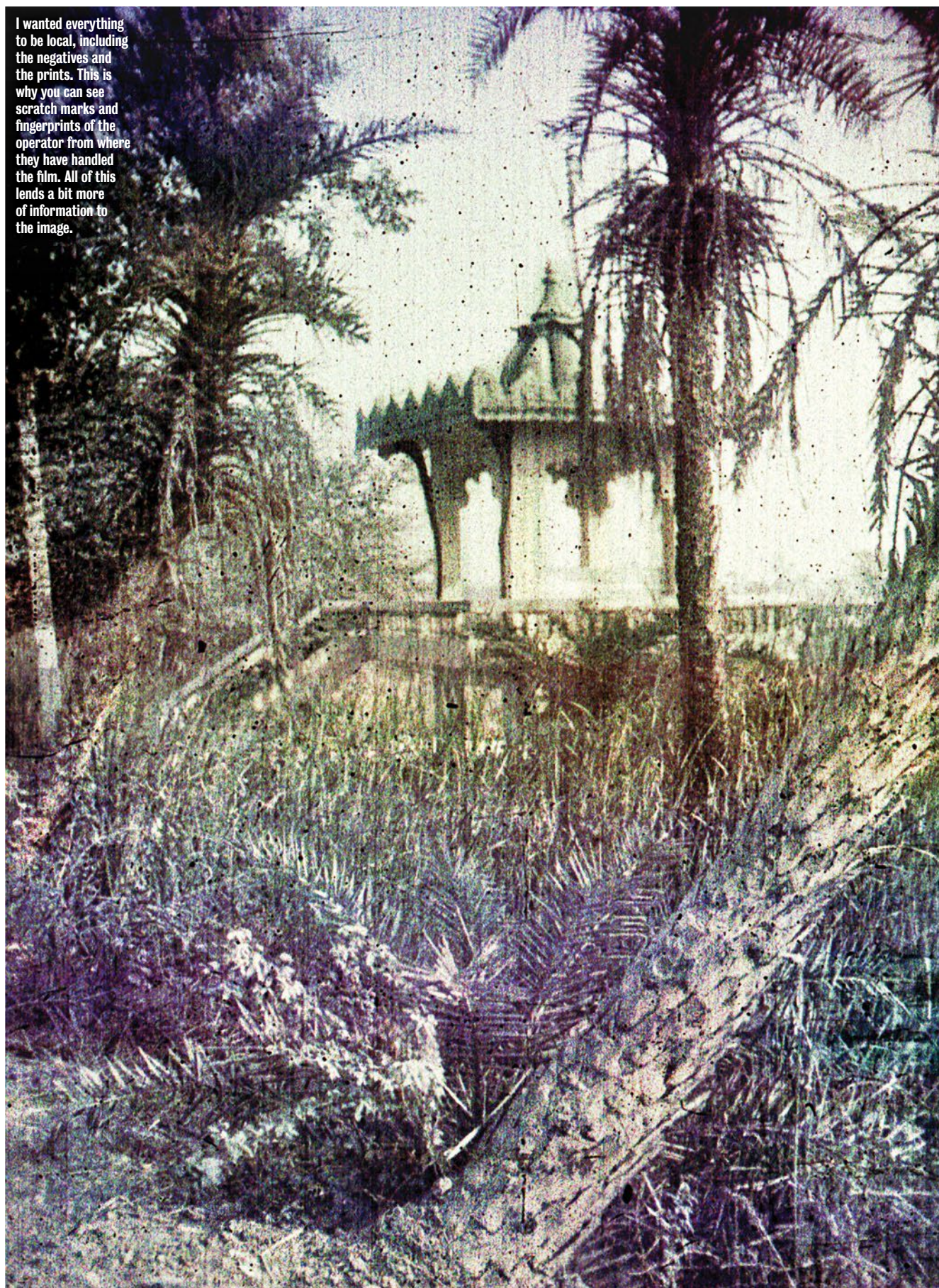
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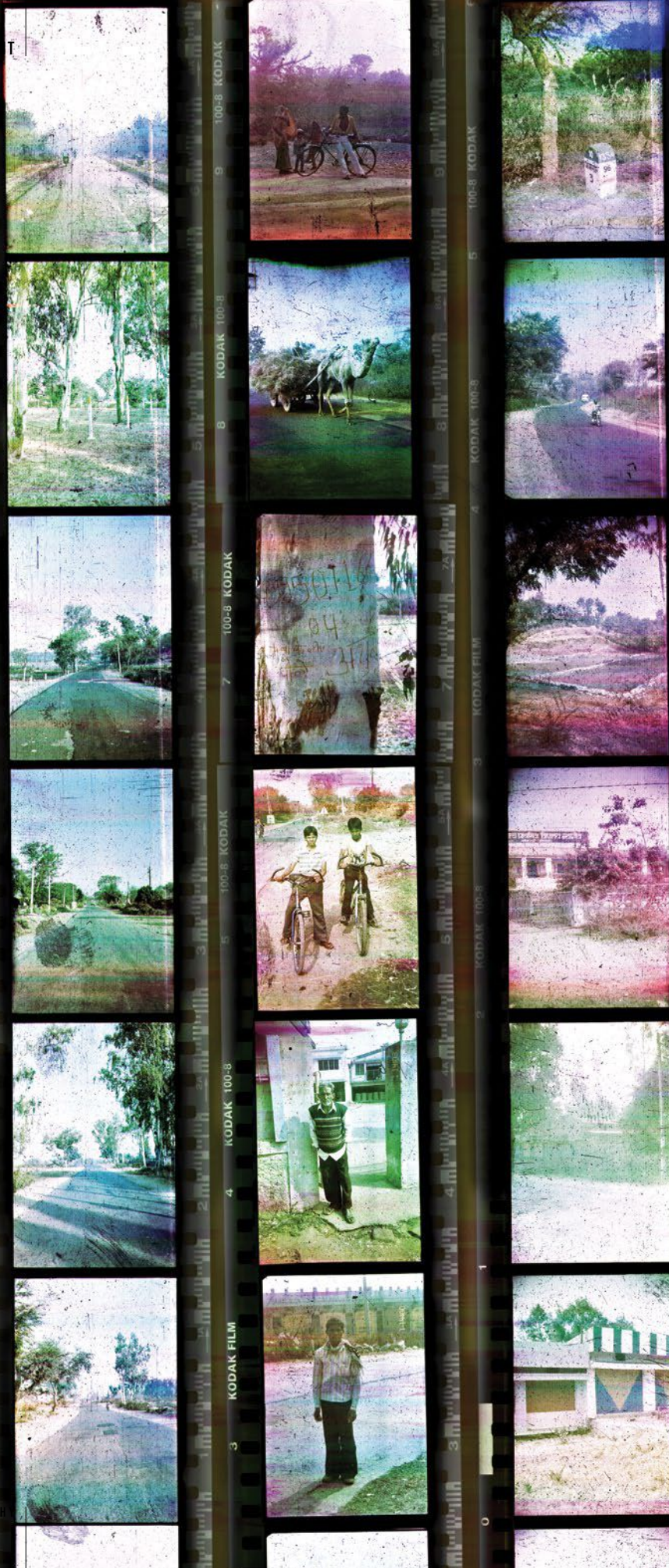
Even though I had to compromise on the technology, it led me to a completely new way of exploring my photography.

The Process

Using three film cameras, I would make three images—one of the road itself, stretching out ahead of me, the second of a person I met there and the third of something from the surroundings. ▶

I wanted everything to be local, including the negatives and the prints. This is why you can see scratch marks and fingerprints of the operator from where they have handled the film. All of this lends a bit more of information to the image.





To create a contact sheet of the negatives, I had to treat a flatbed scanner as a darkroom. Using a torch I would throw light on the scanner three times through red, blue and yellow coloured gelatin sheets. I then superimposed them for the final result.

Tips to Keep in Mind When Photographing Within a Time Period

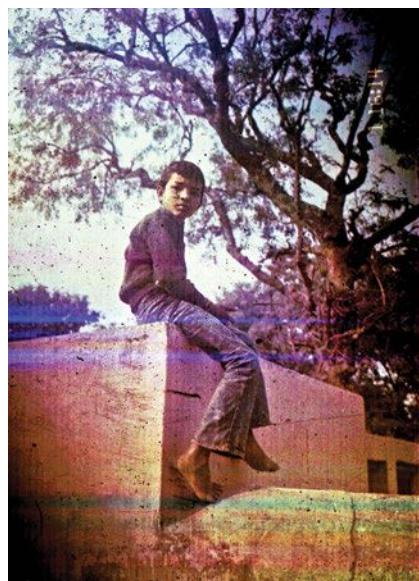
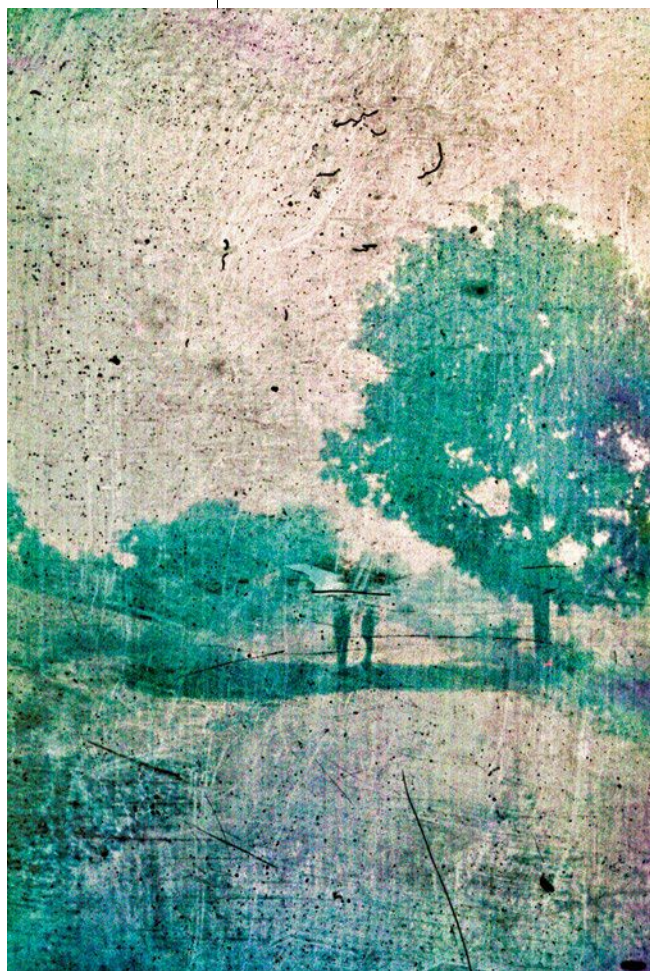
- **Keep Interaction to the Maximum:** When on a road trip in unfamiliar parts, talk to the locals as they will be able to tell you the best places for resources.
- **The Equipment is Not Important:** Sometimes, letting the project take over is the best thing that can happen to it. Don't get too caught up in the quality of equipment you are using. It just distracts you from immersing yourself in the experience.
- **Set Your Parameters:** Decide on some set ways of shooting and then just shoot! Setting parameters gives the project a unique kind of consistency.

I used only local equipment, including a scanner, which is not what one ideally uses to scan negatives to create a contact sheet. What I achieved in the end, was a long map of the road.

Due to the process I adopted, I found that the project began to have a warm and emotional connect. The villagers could immediately recognise and connect with the same places on the road as opposed to places on a map.

To me, it was about collecting bits of information as I went along. By using local, regional technology only, the project came to a point where the process itself broke and the poetry of the images came out. I set a bunch of parameters where I only shot three images and only in the vertical format

Ⓢ Everything with the project had to do with linearity. This included, the way the film moved in the camera, how I moved forward on the road, the scanning and creating of the contact sheet and the large life-size prints I eventually made of the contact sheet.



Ⓢ In a way, I limited my input as a photographer. This loss of control quenched the thirst for finding new meaning in my photographs, in a beautiful way.

at each stop. The project seemed to take on a life of its own, and I found it to be a very cerebrally rewarding experience. BP

— As told to **Natasha Desai**

To view more of Fabien Charreau's work, you can visit www.cargocollective.com/fabiencharreau

My Equipment

I used three locally sourced, inexpensive, plastic film cameras with Kodak Gold and Fujicolor film. I developed the film in a minilab and used a scanner to make the contact sheet.



After some time, my brain took a back seat and the photographs unravelled themselves of their own accord.





I use Instagram for its filters and the ability to crop images and adjust contrast and brightness when needed.

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ON ASSIGNMENT

The Little Women

Davorka Andjelic scouts the nooks and crannies of London, UK in search of the best locations to photograph her unique handcrafted dolls.

My special box with paper dolls is always in my bag as I enjoy traveling and finding new landscapes to shoot.

A trip to Russia last year was the perfect opportunity for a change from London's scenes.

Inspired by a paper angel that my friend gifted me as a Christmas present, I began making paper dolls of my own six years ago. Over the years, the dolls gradually developed, inspired by children's work at the primary school that I work in. When I started using Instagram about three years ago, that is when I really started experimenting with photography.

I used old photographs as backgrounds and set about finding interesting colours and textures too. Soon, I was making my own settings, taking the dolls on my

My Assignment

Description

Combining paper dolls and interesting landscapes to create fun photographs.

Duration

Ongoing since 2009

Notes

My creations are open to interpretation!

travels and trying to find the right scene for each doll. All I try to do is create images that will resonate with each person differently.



Over the years, my dolls and the photographs have evolved. I plan a lot more and spend more time in experimenting with colours, textures, flowers, composition and light.

My Perspective

Combining paper dolls and everyday settings or interesting landscapes is my attempt to link past and present. With each doll, I am creating photographs that deal with a range of emotions like belonging, loneliness, individuality and so on. I take one day at a time. Whatever I feel on that day, influences the images I make. For me, creating a little tableau and finding the right composition is an extremely relaxing experience.

The Process

I find the dresses for the dolls mainly in old *Vogue* magazines. I chose dresses that

appeal to the most to my taste. Also, how can you say no to a red Valentino dress! The posture of the original model plays a large part in selecting the right kind of eyes.

A number of locations in London work well for me and I revisit some of them with different dolls. While the main reactions

Tips to Keep in Mind When Creating a Project of Your Own

- **Involving Family and Friends:** This can help as it is easy to get stuck in the rut of repetition and familiarity. Your loved ones can be a source of inspiration and advice.
- **Tag Your Pictures Right:** Do a little research on hashtags. One surefire way to get your pictures noticed is to make sure you are tagging them right on Instagram.
- **Soak in Some Inspiration:** There is no dearth of creative people on this planet. Visit different kinds of galleries, both online and in person, as these can help spark your own creativity in ways one would not think possible.

My Equipment

I used an Apple iPhone 5s for most of my images as it allows me to stop and take photos whenever I find an interesting setting. I very rarely use my Fuji Fine Pix S 2950. For a project like this, whatever equipment you have at hand will serve you the best.



➡ I feel very inspired when I receive comments from so many different people from around the world telling me how happy my photographs made them. Last year, I was featured on the Instagram blog, which in itself was an overwhelming and encouraging experience.

➡ My son is one of my biggest supporters when it comes to the project. He provides me with valuable advice and much needed shadows when required!

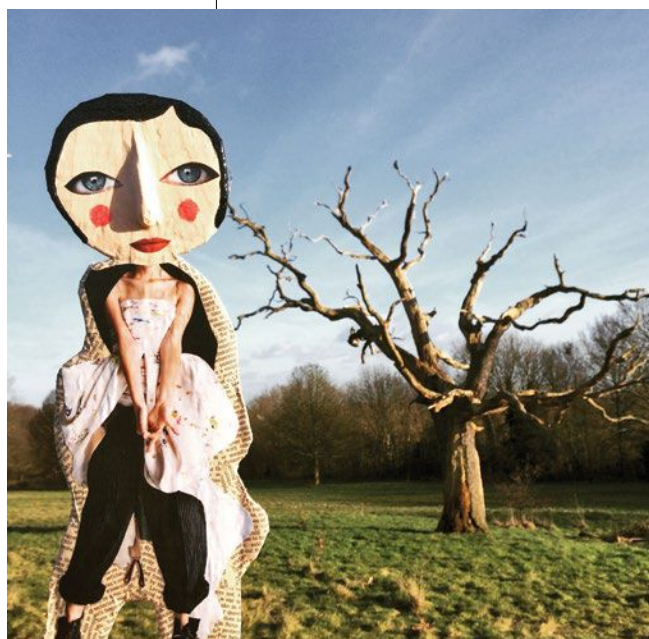
and feedback I receive are from Instagram, I get some fun and even puzzled reactions when I am out shooting too!

The most common comment I receive from people, however, is that the project reminds them of their childhood. This makes me very happy as I always hope that my images provide people with an escape from everyday realities. I want

to awaken the child that we all have in us and remind us of our happy, carefree days. And, someday, I hope to create a children's book dealing with the simpler moments in life, with my photos as illustrations. **BP**

— As told to **Natasha Desai**

To view more images by Davorka Andjelic, you can visit www.instagram.com/tilly2milly



Dungeness in Kent, London is my favourite location. Every visit there is a different and exciting experience.

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The festival of Holi is not just about the action but the smaller details too!



Bibek Smaran Paul

THE VIBRANCY OF HOLI

Protect Your Gear

With so much of water and colour flying around, you must remember to keep equipment safe! You could use a ziplock bag to protect your camera, with a hole cut out for the lens. Or, you could use an old raincoat, cut to accommodate the camera and your hands.

Make sure that the front lens element is covered with a good quality UV filter to protect it from stray drops of water and bumps. Other gear options include using underwater housing for your camera or even using a rugged camera. And, do not forget your lens hood!

Choosing a Lens

Decide on which lens you would like to use on the day and stick to it. Changing lenses in the thick of action is very risky as you may get particles and moisture inside your camera. You could use a prime lens such as a 35mm or a 50mm with an aperture of f/1.8 for portraits.

Or, you could find a high vantage point and use a telephoto lens. If you really

want to have the option of different focal lengths, then you could even carry more than one camera body.

The Best Place to Go

Some places in India like Vrindavan and Mathura, celebrate Holi with massive get-togethers. The women of Barsana, beat men up on the day of Holi in an event known as Lathmar Holi! Every place

📌 **Children and their gaiety make the best subjects during Holi. Do not be afraid to approach them for a portrait!**



Nirvair Singh Rai



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has their own unique way of celebrating the festival.

However, it is not always necessary to visit a different place to make memorable pictures. Your own neighbourhood Holi celebrations could be just the place, if you pay enough attention!

Finding the Quieter Moments

While most of the fun of Holi plays out in the morning, you will be surprised with the gems you will find towards the afternoon, when things are winding down. Leftover pails of colour, mud with various hues splashed on it, people sitting in corners catching their breath, all these make for interesting frames. All you have to do is walk around, take it all in and shoot.

LONG EXPOSURES BY THE WATERSIDE

Find a Point of Interest

When creating a waterscape with a slow shutter speed, look for a marker that the water can flow around. It could be a rock or even a branch dipping into the water.



Sarang Naik

QUICK TIP

By using the slow sync flash option in your camera, you will be able to capture ambient light as well as get your subject sharp.

How Slow Should You Go?

The flow of water appears differently and different shutter speeds. The slower the shutter speed, the smoother the water will look.

Observe the water current to gauge how smoothening a particular stretch with a slow shutter speed will look. Depending on how you compose the image, you will lead the eyes of your viewer. ▶

⚙️ Pay close attention to how you can use the light to complement your overall composition.



Sarang Naik

In certain cases, the success of long exposure images largely depends on the nature of the stationary object in the frame. Here, both the rocks combined look like a menacing crocodile.



Ramasubramanian Krishnamoorthy

A Calmer State of Mind

There is something about being near a water body that calms down human beings. Embrace this feeling, tap deeper into yourself and photograph as you feel. A slow shutter speed and flowing water make for exceptionally dreamy photographs.

QUICK TIP

When photographing portraits, make sure your frame does not crop their appendages. Keep the same rule in mind if cropping during postprocessing.

your equipment or you may find yourself having to leave it with the security!

Get There Early

Reaching the venue before the show begins will mean that you can photograph the band as they do their setup and warm up before the show. There is usually some pre-show banter and fun that can give you priceless frames.

➔ Any waterside provides the ideal place to find people lost in their own thoughts. A long exposure, in this case, can set the mood of the image.

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STUNNING CONCERT PHOTOGRAPHY

Choose the Right Gig

Not all live shows allow photography, as they usually have an official team. Check the rules before setting off with

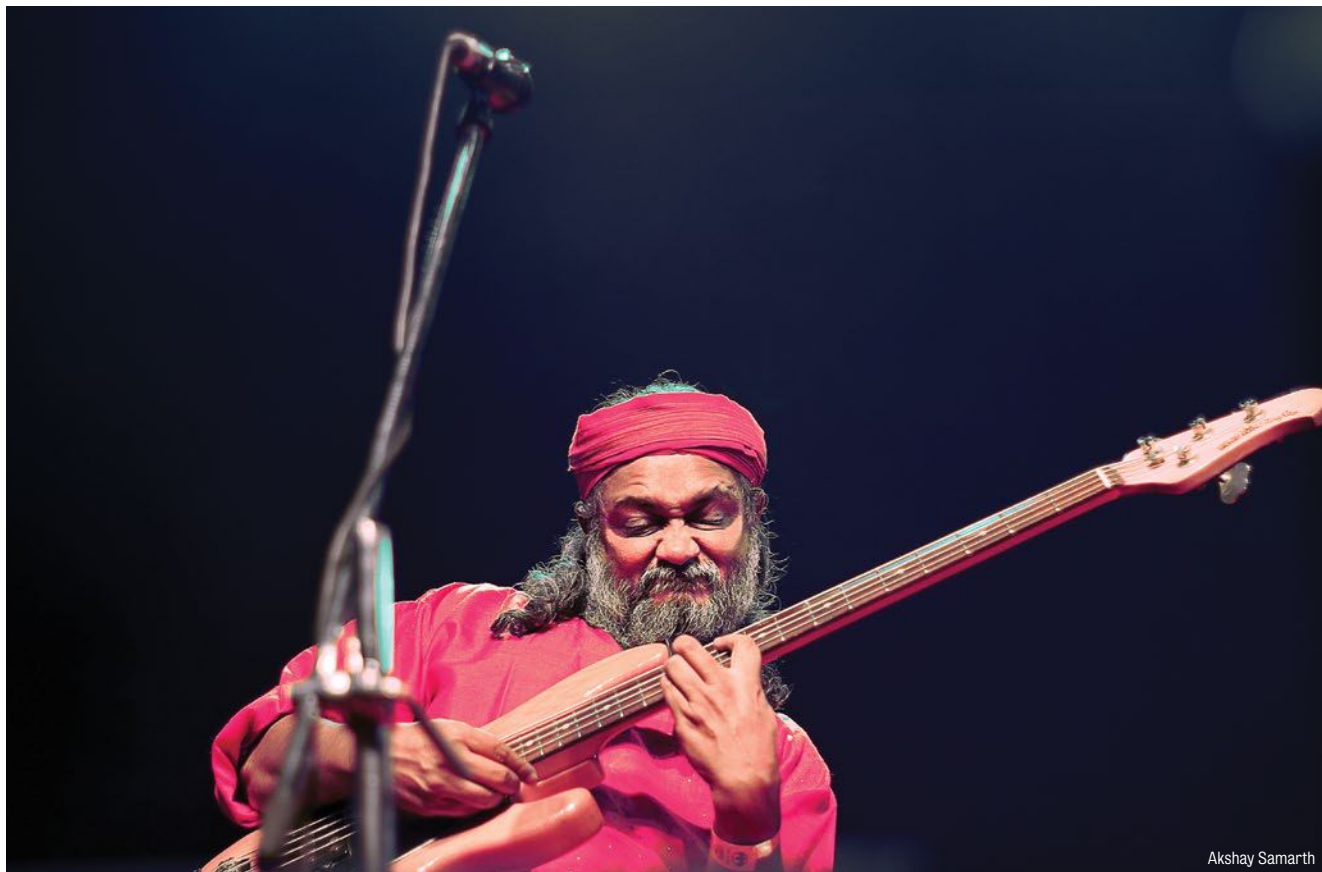
Get the Exposure Right!

With tricky lighting at concerts, remember to use the Spot metering mode as this will help you expose for



Ketan Kundargi

➔ The background lights at the live show could be a problem. However, you can cleverly use them to create a dramatic frame.



Akshay Samarth

⚡ While you always need to be careful of foreground clutter on a stage, you can use it effectively in your composition.

the artists face. You will also need a fast shutter speed if you want to freeze the artist's motion, which will require you to shoot with the aperture wide open and at a higher ISO.

Observing Helps

Before you start photographing, watch how the artists perform for a while. Every person will move a certain way and will have their own postures, expressions and signature moves. Observe these as

it will help you anticipate and capture a great moment!

Not Just the Stage

People at concerts are usually very happy and charged at being at a live performance. Train your lens on the crowd and capture their highs and lows as they let themselves go with the music. You could capture the movement of swaying hands or even isolate one person in the moving crowd. 📷

Participate in the 'Reader's Tip Contest' on betterphotography.in/contests to win a chance to be featured in the magazine and win exciting prizes!

READER'S TIP

Capturing Fireworks in All Their Glory

I made this picture during the National Day celebration in Qatar, when a whole day of festivity ends with fireworks in the evening.

Long before the fireworks began, I checked the exposure setting and kept the aperture wide open. I underexposed my frame by two stops. I did this because when the fireworks start, the bright lights would overexpose the frame if I had kept it at the shutter speed being suggested by the camera.

Fireworks are always spectacular on their own, but adding a simple element in the foreground can make them even more attractive. I decided to focus on the boat in the frame. I chose the widest focal length of the lens and positioned my camera accordingly.

I try to make as many pictures as I can at the beginning of the show as the smoke ends up ruining the background later.

— Sanjiban Ghosh



Sanjiban Ghosh

I made this picture with a Nikon D5100 and a Nikkor 18–55mm f/3.5–5.6G VR at a shutter speed of 1/40 sec.

Q & A

Want your doubts cleared? Write to The Editor, Better Photography, Network18 Media & Investments Ltd., One Indiabulls Centre, Unit No 501, Fifth Floor, Tower I, Jupiter Textile Mills, Senapati Bapat Marg, Elphinstone Road, Mumbai-400 013, Maharashtra, India.
E-mail: editor@betterphotography.in
Facebook: www.facebook.com/betterphotography
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BRIEFLY

Flash Guide Number?

The guide number is the product of the maximum flash-to-subject distance (in feet or metres, and for a specific flash head zoom setting), and the f-number of the aperture that will correctly expose a digital sensor (at ISO 100). Thus, GN = distance x f-number, and this depicts the maximum power of output possible by a flash unit. For flashguns with zooms, the GN of a flash increases as the flash head zooms in.

Is Periodical Servicing Good?

My camera is about to come to the end of its warranty term. Should I get it serviced? Do I need to do this regularly?

Srijith Phillip, Bengaluru, via email

If you are the sort of photographer who does not mind braving some dirt or rain on your gear to get the shot, then your cameras and lenses probably could use a trip to the service centre at this point. Even if you are a careful photographer, check your lenses for fungus on the elements, and dust on the sensor. If you think there is grime, dust and fungus within your gear, or if there are buttons getting stuck or malfunctioning components, getting your gear serviced would certainly be beneficial.

However, if your gear does not need cleaning or servicing, the general adage holds true—if it is not broken, don't repair it.



➔ There's nothing like an old camera displayed on a shelf to spark off a good conversation. Of course, it would be better if there is a real story to go with it!

What do I do with Old Gear?

I have a number of old cameras and film holders that have been handed down by my grandfather. Obviously, there is a certain sense of attachment, but what do I do with them eventually? How do I maintain them?

Advaita Sharma, Bengaluru, via email



Old equipment can be sturdy and delicate at the same time. You need to keep them away from dust and moisture, and clean them once in a while. The most delicate parts of a camera are the leather trims and bellows, the rubber hoods and gaskets (which dry out, come apart or crack), and any exposed mechanical moving parts. Be very gentle with old gear. Never force a lever or a button if it appears stuck, because you can cause permanent, irreparable damage. Try loosening stuck parts by using a blower bulb and thicker sable hair brushes with shorter bristles to get rid of particulate dirt, and by

➔ If your camera starts looking anything like this, and the warranty on it is about to expire, getting it serviced makes a lot of sense! Now, if only the service centres for different brands were as easily interchangeable as DSLR lenses...

WHAT IS

Point of Departure

'Point of departure' is a term used quite eloquently by a number of photographers including Ralph Gibson. A look at some of his work will give an idea of the concept of it.

Making the Photograph Interesting

Point of departure is exactly what it sounds like... a movement away from the norm. For a photograph to appear interesting, one needs to follow basic guidelines of subject placement, composition, lighting, apparent movement, implied lines, etc. A perfectly composed image might look very good, but when there is a single element in the scene that moves against these guidelines in an interesting or odd way, it adds a sense of tension or drama to the image. This is the point of departure.

Be Mindful Of...

In a sense, the point of departure is a carefully planned error, but because it is deliberate, it is not really a mistake. Therein lies the distinction. A mistake cannot be called a point of departure, but on the rare occasion it can be made to look

like one with creative cropping and editing. On the other hand, having too many elements in the frame break the rules will simply lead to a distracting, confused image.



This image of a petrol spill on the road and the neighbouring image of a face made out of the textures and elements on the beach, depict how mundane subjects can be seen differently.



Photographs by Ambarni Atsar



I Just Do Not Understand How Bad Photography Can Be Good!

A close friend of mine and I had taken up photography two years ago. Our interests have differed from the beginning, but now, it seems as though I just cannot understand her pictures. I just feel awkward when I am asked for an opinion because I feel they are average, or worse. In fact, even some of the legendary masters that are generally regarded as brilliant, also seem very ordinary to me! Why am I not able to appreciate them? Am I so obtuse that I don't understand the nuances?

Rohan Trivedi, *New Delhi, via email*

There is absolutely nothing to feel obtuse about. Think of this... some of the greatest legends in music and painting did not get a shred of recognition during their own lifetimes. But we marvel at their efforts today, and even study them as some of the most important works of art ever made.

Similarly, there are many brilliant photographers whose works have gotten them ridiculed and even ostracised from

the societies that they lived in, but who are now regarded as masters. Sometimes, it takes time to understand or get used to a certain way of seeing.

Yet, you are certainly on your way to this understanding. The first step in arriving at an answer is to ask the right questions. Since you mentioned that your friend is close to you, perhaps you could simply ask for an explanation as to why she likes some of the images she shot. Get into a discussion on some of works of the great photographers that she happens to enjoy. This might help you appreciate her work more. Likewise, attending talks, photography exhibitions, reading books and interviews, conversing with other accomplished photographers will all help.

That said, too much analysis can also destroy the charm of photography. Study any image deeply enough, and you will find something to like or dislike about it! Having a personal sense of perception and opinion is also just as important as your attempt at appreciation.

BRIEFLY

Using Viewfinders with Eyeglasses

One way out is to use the dioptre correction dial found near the viewfinder in advanced compact cameras and DSLRs. It usually allows a correction for -2 to +1 dioptres. Beyond, this, some cameras allow you to attach an additional viewfinder eyepiece for added correction. Alternatively, you need to start using the rear LCD in Live View mode, with your prescription spectacles.

gently working the button or lever to see if it comes unstuck. If the equipment is in operating condition, you need to exercise the mechanism every few weeks or so. If you do not know how a piece of equipment functions, read up on it or ask someone familiar with old equipment.

What can you do with it your old equipment? First read up on them. You may find that you have a treasure trove of collectible cameras or antiques on your hands that may be worth quite a lot. When selling it is not an option, and even if the equipment you have is inexpensive, simply displaying it well in a showcase may result in plenty of living room conversations.

The saddest thing to do is to just let it lie there over the years and fall into complete disrepair, until it is finally discarded as junk. You would serve the memory of your grandfather better by donating the equipment to a camera museum, or to a collector who loves old gear and maintains it well.

Are Cheap Flashguns Good?

I need a basic flash. Are the flashguns available from Chinese brands as good?

Zeenia Parakh, *Hyderabad, via email*

While issues of flashguns spoiling a camera's circuits are very few, it is more likely that cheap flashguns may develop snags. Opt for brands like Vivitar (the American made 285HV does not have TTL, but is a legendary flashgun), or well known Chinese brands like Yongnuo or Voking.

Preserving Hard Drives

I use internal hard drives for storage, which I connect with a HDD dock. I have been extremely careful in handling them—storing them in their original anti-static bags, and using them as rarely to preserve the motors. Is there anything else I can do?

Zeenia Parakh, *Hyderabad, via email*



➔ Merely packing and storing HDDs well is not good enough at all! You are risking the loss of your data.

Firstly, any HDD can fail at any point without warning, regardless of how safely you store or handle it. So get yourself a secondary backup! It is a good idea to use the original anti-static bags, but never use regular plastics as it can build up a static charge that can disrupt electronics. Place them in a wooden cabinet. For further protection, you can also use an antistatic mat which need to be earthed using your regular earthing terminal in your plug point. With mats, you can also use relatively airtight, anti-static (PET) containers, with a pouch of silica gel in them to reduce moisture. Finally, remember that HDDs can demagnetise and lose data if you do not use them once every couple of months or so.



Birthe Piontek

- Originally from Germany, Birthe moved to Canada 10 years ago, after completing her MFA from the University of Duisburg-Essen in Communication Design and Photography.
- In 2011, her series, *The Idea of North*, culminated into a monograph.
- She is addicted to Instagram. You can follow her on @birthepiontek.

The Pursuit of Identity

Step into the uncanny world of Birthe Piontek, who discusses the complexities of life with Conchita Fernandes.

You will often find Birthe alone in her studio, fiddling with several photo prints. “What are you trying to tell me?” she questions the person in the image. She will then begin to either cut up the photo or make creases, or even bathe it in glitter. At other times, she will ponder about the treatment she would like to give to the photograph. There is a lot waiting to be discovered in the print that she has in her hand. However, much before Birthe’s obsession with uncovering the secrets behind a photograph was the birth of

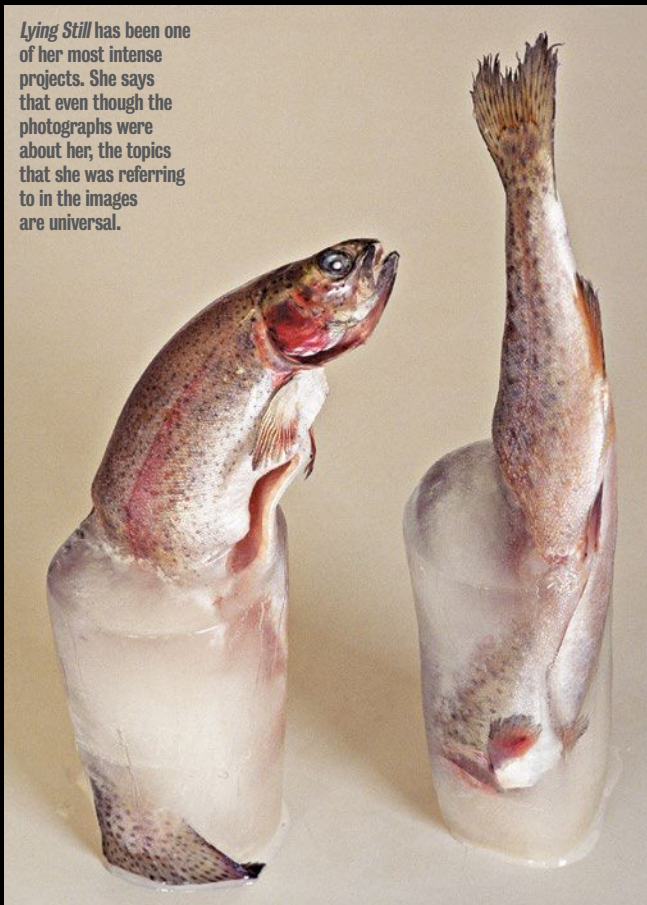
an idea... what can a photograph reveal about identity?

Conveying Transformation

Birthe’s curiosity with the concept of identity came naturally, as a result of her outgoing personality. “I am a people person, and I really like listening to stories,” she says. However, this passion took a more psychological turn when she became keen on exploring how people think, feel and express themselves. However, before she began studying others, she started with studying herself in her initial work, *Lying Still*.

➤ In *Lying Still*, the photographs deal with intimacy, mortality, sexuality, the different roles and relationships that people find themselves in and how that changes them.

Lying Still has been one of her most intense projects. She says that even though the photographs were about her, the topics that she was referring to in the images are universal.



GREAT MASTERS

Stanley Kubrick

The photographic career
of a Hollywood great

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PHOTOFEATURE

Rajesh Kumar Singh on the
different colours of faith at
the Lolark Chatt Puja

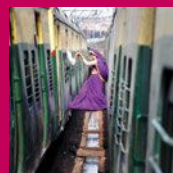
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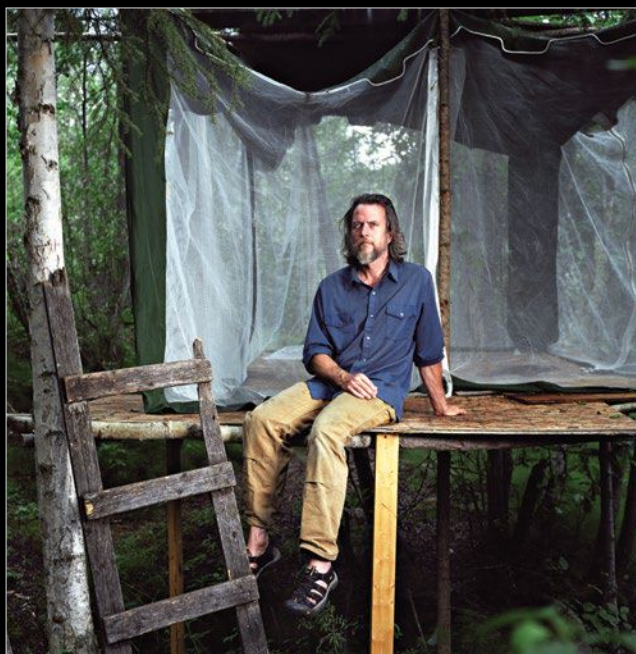
YOUR PICTURES

A showcase of the
best images sent by
our readers

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Lying Still wasn't just a personal journey chronicling her sickness, but also an important realisation about how her body would never be the same and will continue to change.



It took her a while to be accepted into the close-knit community of Yukon, and to get the locals interested in her project.

Birthe used self-portraits and still life to express individuation and change. The visual diary started out as a result of illnesses and ailments that she endured since 2010. One of them was finding out that she will never be able to have kids. "The things that I got diagnosed with wouldn't just go away. I realised that there was very little that I could do to change my situation. I still continue to grieve for some of the losses." She turned to photography as a mechanism to process her situation. "It was almost like therapy," she said.

The project involved her procuring objects from around the house and posing

with them in different parts of her home. It was almost as if she surrendered to her viewers, spilling all her anxieties to them.

Idealising the North

While she continued to make self-portraits, her next project took her several miles away to Dawson City, in the Yukon Territory of Canada. Birthe read and was inspired by American author Jack London's stories of his time spent in the Klondike region of Yukon, in the late 1800s. In his stories, he provided valuable details of the wilderness there, especially in his famous book *The Call of the Wild*.

GADGETS & GEAR

- When asked what gear she uses, Birthe responds with "I am a dinosaur with cameras."
- For the past 10 years, she has been using her Hasselblad 500 C/M for almost all of her projects, and reserves her Canon EOS-1Ds Mark III for editorial work.

TIPS BY BIRTHE

- Her only tip to photographers is to learn to just let go and get back to projects that you might have found frustrating initially, at a later date.
- “Just trust yourself, your creativity and vision. It is all a part of being an artist,” she says.

☞ She was intrigued by the idea of being in a small town where everybody knew one another, and where the closest metropolis was a seven-hour drive away.



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“The Idea of North is my favourite project. Not only because of the wonderful time I had up there, but also because it reiterated the reason why I took up photography in the first place—to make pictures of people.”

No wonder she was fascinated by the place.

“When I moved to Vancouver in 2005, I wanted to explore the country. I was especially interested in the North, as the vastness of that region not only makes up such a big part of Canada’s landmass, but also of Canadian identity,” she says. Her series is aptly titled *The Idea of North*, and is inspired by Canadian pianist Glenn Gould’s work, also by the same name.

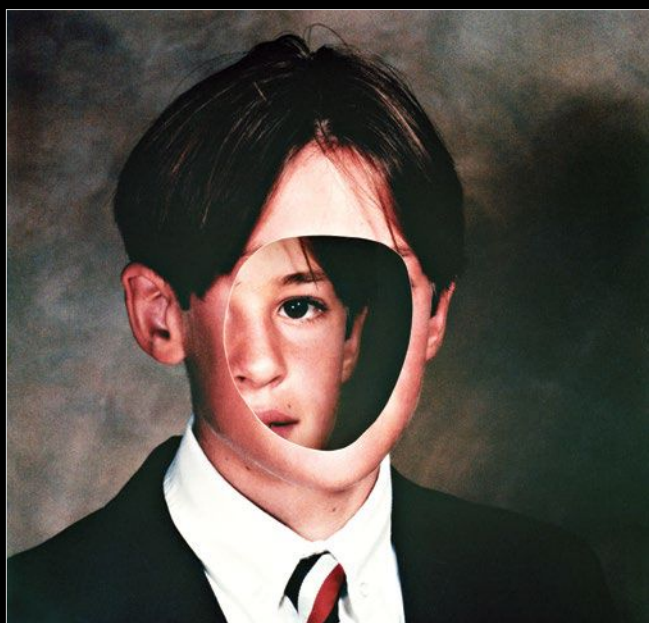
She went about the project photographing people’s lives and identities, shaped by this particular region. “Yukon’s history is closely interwoven with adventurism, discovery and opportunities. I wanted to see how or if this is reflected in the people.”

Unearthing Untold Stories

However, as pleased as she was with *The Idea of North*, Birthe felt a little



In a way, *The Idea of the North* was a huge eye opener for her. She couldn’t fathom a place so remote and shaped so much by the nature surrounding it.



🔗 When she began collecting old photographs, Birthe specifically looked for formal portraits, so that her viewers could build a connection to the individual's face and what lies beneath it.

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🔗 She would spend several hours on a photograph to decipher its story. Questions like "Who is this person?" and "What is specific to this person?" were common.

unsettled... she felt like she was merely hitting the surface. "There was something in me that was looking for a new approach in the way I photographed. I kept thinking of all the photos that I made of people, and continued pondering over what they actually tell."

While she was shooting for *Lying Still*, she began collecting vintage photographs from various sources, even online. The idea for *Mimesis* (2012) was then born, where she wanted to express human identity and her view of the photograph as an object. "I began to play with the images, and all of a sudden I felt that something was happening there."



🔗 She spent a lot of time in thrift stores and craft outlets, collecting materials like fabric and glitter for *Mimesis*.

Each photograph was given a different treatment, and there was a lot of trial and error involved. While some of her images are cut up, others are folded in a particular manner. She wasn't just looking to create something unusual, neither was she going for shock value. The images were meant to be reminders for reassessing our need to make several photographs to validate our experiences.

Brimming with Creativity

Looking back at her work, it is worth noting how Birthe has explored the concept of identity in different ways. Taking inspiration from different artists,

🔗 *Mimesis* is an ongoing project. She hopes to take her viewers "beyond their usual, conditioned way of seeing and feeling."





⌚ Since she worked on *Mimesis* from her home studio, it did get a little solitary for Birthe. For her next project, she hopes to have human interaction.

“Dealing with criticism was tough, but it’s getting better. For instance, a lot of men just did not understand *Lying Still*. But it didn’t bother me. I realised that both of us are operating on two very different points.”

⌚ Deciding on the treatment of the image wasn’t always easy. There were times when she had to abandon experimentation because the final look did not work for the image. She wouldn’t discard it; rather she would switch to another photograph and return to the previous one a little later.

she realised that in photography, it is not always necessary to wait for the moment. It can be created too, which is evident in projects like *Lying Still* and *The Idea of North*. Moreover, her incredible imagination has not only given us a means



The actual process of transforming the photograph wasn’t difficult for her at all. Figuring out how to set it up and what the final result actually meant was the tough part.

of learning more about photography, but also perhaps, the key to unlocking our innermost secrets. 📷

You can find more of Birthe’s work on www.birtheptiontek.com



My Best Shot



TASHI TOBGYAL

Why it is my best shot

Most photojournalists think that they have seen it all. However, every time that I enter a conflict zone, it all seems new to me. When I was at the refugee camp at Shamli, I was astounded at the number of displaced people living there without any proper food or sanitation. There were several deaths too, mostly those of children, whose bodies just couldn't cope with the derelict conditions. Amazingly enough, many kids still attended school. This photograph, to me, summarises the spirit of these tiny souls, and how life still goes on, irrespective of the challenges that it throws at us.

Where and when I shot this image

The image was shot during the 2013 Muzaffarnagar riots, in the Shamli district of Uttar Pradesh.

How I achieved it

While I was making pictures of the children at the *madrasa*, I noticed a little girl blankly staring at me. Even when I was actively moving around the area, she just wouldn't move her gaze away from me. As I approached her for a photograph, I noticed how a tear in the tarpaulin on the roof, caused a shaft of light to fall on the girl. I knew then that I had to capture this moment.

The gear I used to get the shot

I used a Canon EOS 5D Mark II camera along with a Canon EF 16–35mm f/2.8L II USM lens.

Tashi Tobgyal started out as a Picture Researcher for several travel publications. Later in 2006, he joined The Indian Express as a photojournalist, and still continues to work there.







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(1928–1999)

Stanley Kubrick

In Stanley Kubrick's short career as a photojournalist you can find the roots of the wunderkind director to come. Aditya Nair finds out.

Somewhere in the pantheon dedicated to film legends, there is a special throne reserved for Stanley Kubrick. Arguably the finest auteur in the history of the medium, his films like *A Clockwork Orange*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Full Metal Jacket* have gone on to inspire almost every director who has come after him.

A large part of his mystique comes from the fact that this young director seemed to materialise on the Hollywood circuit with an almost fully formed visual and narrative aesthetic. However, before the appearance

of Stanley Kubrick, the director, was Stanley Kubrick, a young schoolboy, who became the photographer for *Look* magazine.

1940s: A Photographic Odyssey

In many ways, Kubrick's first step into the visual arts was rather ordinary. When he was thirteen, his father Jacob Kubrick, gave him a second-hand Graflex camera. He began by making images of daily life in New York and developing them in a darkroom that he built.

In April 1945, USA lost Franklin D Roosevelt, widely hailed as the third most

“I don’t like doing interviews. There is always the problem of being misquoted or, what’s even worse, of being quoted exactly.”
—Stanley Kubrick

popular President after Abraham Lincoln and George Washington. The Second World War was still not over. At that time, Kubrick’s image of a newspaper vendor looking morose whilst surrounded by papers announcing FDR’s death, quietly captured the mood of the country.

All of sixteen, Kubrick sold the image to *Look* for a sum that would be roughly equivalent to USD 330 (approx. Rs. 20,000) and thus, kickstarted his career at the magazine. He went on to shoot over 27,000 images and 300 photostories for them.

His magazine of choice is also quite telling. *Look* was often seen as the antithesis of *Life* magazine. The choice of stories in

Look were often darker and explored themes like delinquency, alcoholism and divorce.

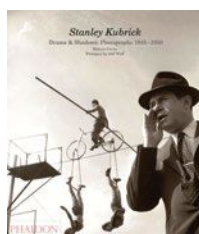
The Making of a Storyteller

Stanley Kubrick’s obsession with perfection is renowned, much to the anguish of those working with him on his films.

What amused me quite a bit was to learn that the image of the newspaper vendor was, in fact, rehearsed to get the look of despair. At a time, when photojournalism was considered to be absolutely true, here was a kid more interested in conveying the essence of truth rather than a literal interpretation of the word. In his own words, “Real is good, interesting is better.” ▶

◀ Kubrick juxtaposed the circus president, John Ringling North, yelling out orders while aerialists practised cycling on a tightrope in the background. It was a way of showing the duality of order and chaos at the circus.

◀ Stanley Kubrick would often switch between staged and real moments in his photoserries, choosing to focus primarily on the overall narrative.

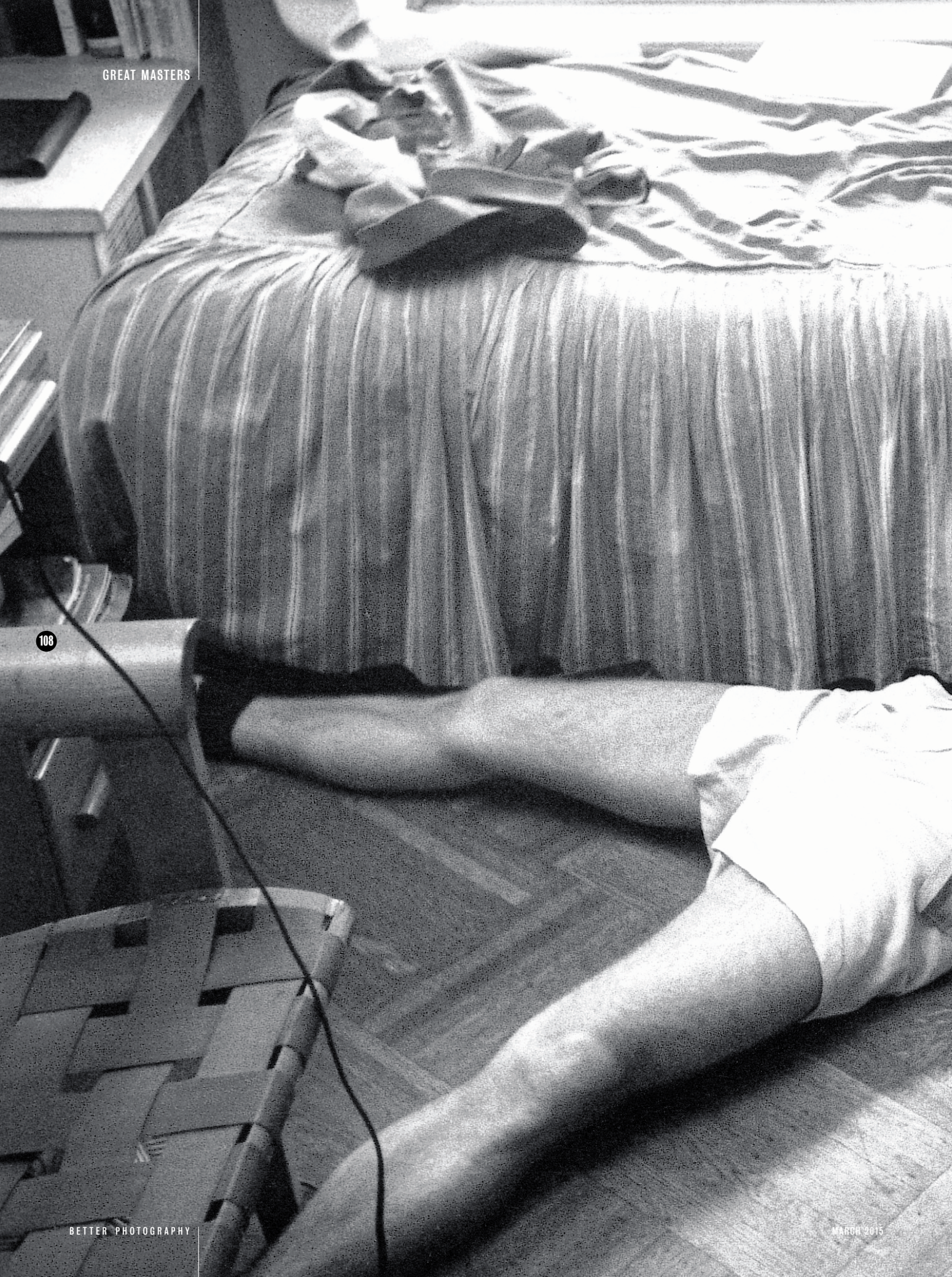


Stanley Kubrick: Drama & Shadows

This is the first book to document the early photographs of the director Stanley Kubrick. It explores how one of the most influential directors of our time used photography as a means to master visual storytelling techniques and cultivate his signature style.



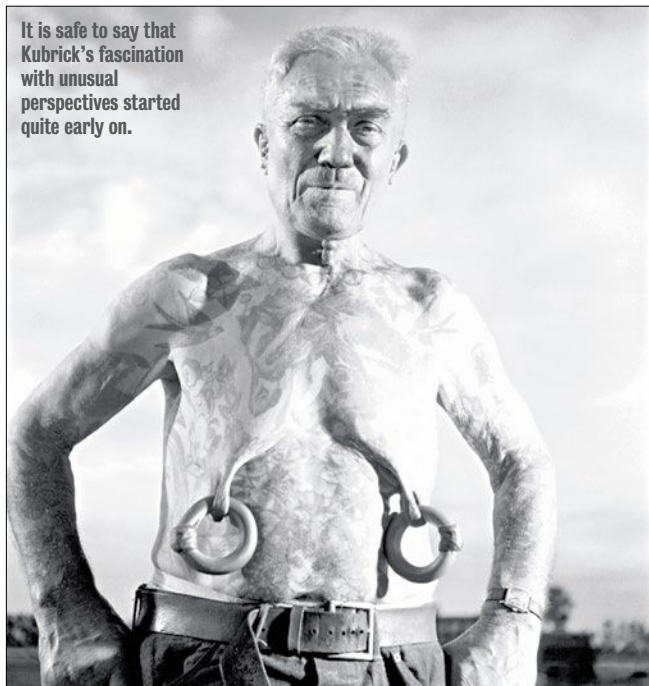
Images Courtesy: Stanley Kubrick: Shadows and Drama by Rainer Crone, Phaidon Press
 Reproduced by permission of Museum of the City of New York





The image shows a young Montgomery Clift, an actor who later went on to be nominated for four Oscars and was known for his portrayal of moody, sensitive characters.

It is safe to say that Kubrick's fascination with unusual perspectives started quite early on.



This may have been the first known instance of Kubrick's experiments with mise-en-scène. However, it quickly became a recurring theme throughout his photographic works and, subsequently, his films, and thus, Kubrick's joy of staging and love for composition became evident.

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🕒 Jazz became one of Kubrick's favourite subjects to photograph. During the height of his film career, he even attempted to make a film that explored jazz in Europe under the Third Reich.

The Emergence of Trademark Kubrick

A common theme in his films, was a sarcastic, often times ironic portrayal of prevalent public opinion. A similar train of thought can be seen in his photojournalistic



works, which show a neorealistic side of humanity and the mundane.

This can be seen in his photographs of celebrities, musicians and socialites, he ignored the glamour and fame, choosing to show instead the everyday nature of their lives. While shooting Frank Sinatra, what struck Kubrick wasn't the star himself, but the blind adoration of his fans.

Kubrick often came across as someone who didn't quite fit in. The camera provided him the perfect cage through which he could be a renegade. Quite the voyeurist, had he chosen to, I am quite certain he could have out-Hitchcocked Alfred Hitchcock. (Stanley had a habit of checking the medicine cabinet of people he visited, to see what pills they were on.)

He often hid his camera in a paper bag to avoid drawing attention to himself. Conversely, there were times when he wanted to include himself. In which case the image quickly became a self portrait, with Stanley Kubrick dead centre.

Tales of Ambiguity

His photographs show a penchant for what we would consider the dark side of his subjects. His series were often as much psychological profiles of the subject as they were narrative feature stories. Through the use of contrast and shadows, he always added an air of mystery and drama as if to suggest "here is what I have shown you, but is that all there is to it?" Many of his movies offer similarly abrupt endings, even disjointed storytelling.

🕒 In *Drama & Shadows*, Rainer points out that even at a young age Kubrick showed immense talent in constructing complex compositions in which camera positioning and lighting played a crucial role.

"The essence of a dramatic form is to let an idea come over people without it being plainly stated. Saying something directly is simply not as potent as when you allow people to discover it for themselves."
—Stanley Kubrick

**“Observation is a dying art.”
—Stanley Kubrick**

In *Full Metal Jacket*, Kubrick shows the filmgoer two disjointed halves of a story, told through the eyes of Private Joker (later Sergeant). Each half could easily be considered an individual film in itself. However, by combining them without giving any real explanation, he makes the audience choose what dots to connect and consequently, what meaning to derive.

Not Quite the Nihilist

Given his choice of subjects, it is easy to look at Kubrick's work as that of a misanthrope. Admittedly, he wasn't a sunshine-and-rainbows kind of guy. However, when asked, “If life is so purposeless, do you feel it is worth living?” in an interview with *Playboy*, Kubrick said, “However vast the darkness, we must supply our own light.”

A major influence on Stanley Kubrick and Arthur C Clarke were the ideas of Robert

Ardery, when they were developing 2001: *A Space Odyssey*. In a way, Kubrick's creations may be best described through Ardery's quote, “We were born of risen apes, not fallen angels, and the apes were armed killers besides.... The miracle of man is not how far he has sunk but how magnificently he has risen. We are known among the stars for our poems, not our corpses.”

That he was always going to be a filmmaker was something Kubrick said he realised early on in his childhood. At the same time, he knew the leg up that photography gave him.

“To make a film entirely by yourself, which initially I did, you may not have to know very much about anything else, but you must know about photography.” A notion confirmed by Jan Harlan, Kubrick's executive producer, who says, “He always stayed a photographer.”

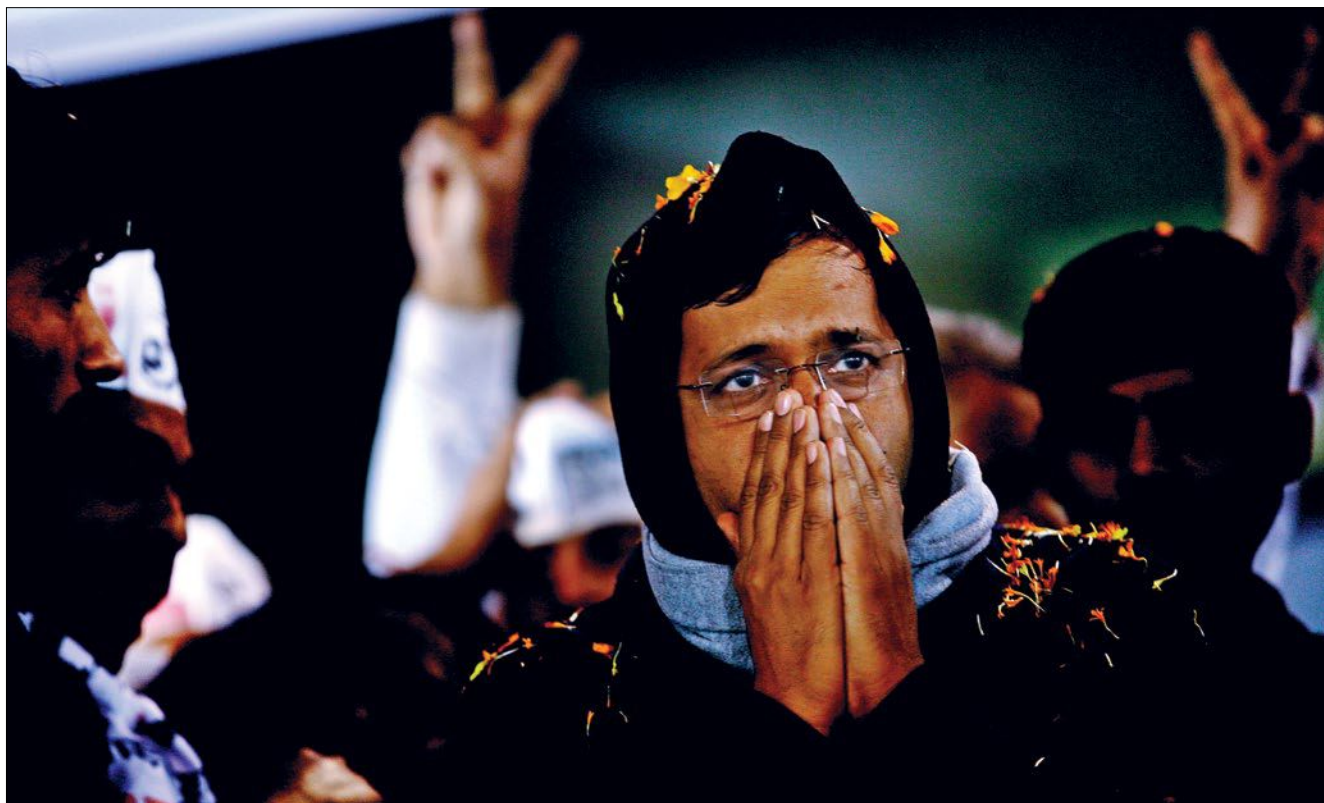
Kubrick's images combine elements of drama, irony and often times a sense of mystery.



A selection of some of the best images from the Indian mainstream media

1000 Words

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Praveen Khanna,
The Indian Express

Standing in Disbelief

The National Convener, and now the Chief Minister of New Delhi, Arvind Kejriwal reacts during a rally in West Delhi. While the image was made before his landslide victory, his expression as well as the flowers foreshadow the momentous event.



Birds of a Feather

During Makar Sankranti, a flock of pigeons take flight, unfazed by the people who are flying kites. The birds and the kites would have been indistinguishable, if not for the spots of colour scattered throughout the frame. The image is a strong comment on how we endanger birds by flying kites.

Pratham Gokhale,
Hindustan Times



Sonu Mehta,
Hindustan Times

From Hand to Facepalm

The Indian National Congress' embarrassing defeat in the 2015 Delhi Legislative Assembly elections could not have been more perfectly encapsulated than through this image. In a very tongue-in-cheek fashion, the photographer has represented what Indian National Congress members' might be going through.

Neeraj Priyadarshi,
The Indian Express

Charisma and Style

US President Barack Obama is mobbed by the members of the audience after his speech at Siri Fort auditorium in New Delhi in January. Among the sea of cellphones and cameras taking photos of him, Obama emerges as the centre of attraction.

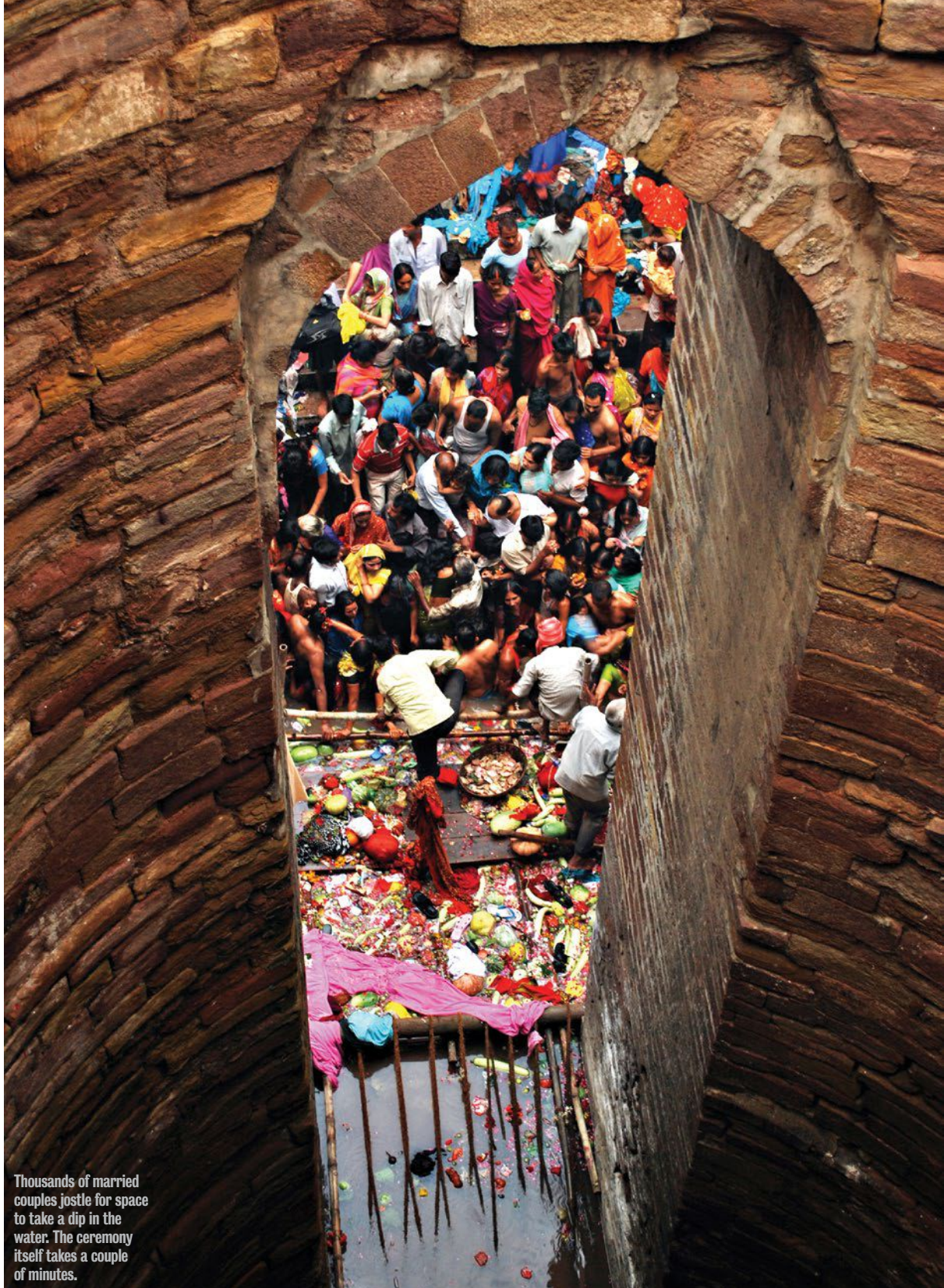


PHOTO FEATURE



Rajesh Kumar Singh is a Varanasi-based photographer, whose work is shaped in the narrow bylanes of his fascinating city. He makes images with the goal to draw the viewers' attention to the various problems that plague human society. He feels that the stories from the marginalised strata need to be heard, which is the basis of several of his photo projects.

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Thousands of married couples jostle for space to take a dip in the water. The ceremony itself takes a couple of minutes.

Resolute Faith

Rajesh Kumar Singh takes you through the bedlam and chaos in Varanasi during Lolark Chatt Puja, to show you the unwavering faces of devotion.

MARCH 2015



➤ The devotees become blind to the items floating in the water, which includes vegetables, flowers, clothes and footwear.

Tulsi Ghat in Varanasi transforms into a communion of hundreds of people during Lolark Shashti, a festival dedicated to the Sun God. This festival sees thousands of married couples taking a dip in the ancient steep well of the Lolark Kund, with only one intention in mind. The sheer amount of couples who visit this place come with the hope that they will be blessed with a

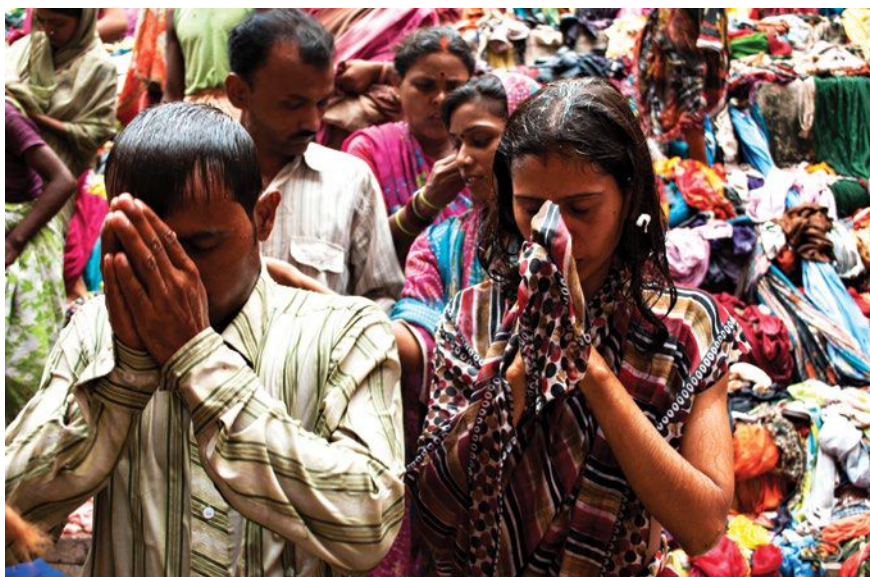
baby. Moreover, once the couples take a dip in the water, they leave behind whatever possessions they have on them, including their clothes, footwear, and even jewellery.

India is a country governed by firm religious beliefs, and people still continue to follow ancient traditions, despite their feasibility today. This is what I wanted to portray with this series.

— As told to Supriya Joshi

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“Catering to the inflow of visitors, small shops mushroom around Lolark Kund, further adding to the chaos.”



➤ The couples pray to the Sun God to bless them with a child and then offer a vegetable, mostly a gourd, as form of prayer. It is believed that the couple never eats that particular vegetable again in their lifetime.



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⬆ There have been several instances of stampedes that occur in the area during the festival. However, this has not stopped the devotees from paying their respects.

⬇ Those who have been blessed with a baby after visiting Lolark Kund come back again to offer their gratitude to the Sun God. Babies have their heads tonsured in a big ceremony, involving musicians who play the drums.

“It is commonly understood that faith takes precedence over common sense. But when there are so many people who believe in a certain concept, who are you to question their ways?”



📍 Families who visit during the festival set up camps right outside and cook meals for the Sun God.

Tips for Photographing Festivals with Large Human Gatherings

- Don't be judgemental. You might not share the beliefs of the devotees, but don't let your notions cloud over the vision for the photo project.
- Keep your gear safe. Any such large gatherings are potential hotbeds for pickpockets.
- Talk to the devotees, find out where their sense of belief stems from. It will give you ideas for your approach towards the festival itself.
- Look for vantage points that will help you show the scale of the gathering itself.

📍 The belongings left behind by the devotees are distributed amongst the priests. It takes two to three days to completely clean out the area.

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Your Pictures

This month, we challenged our readers to photograph their unique moments from when they were in transit. Here is a look at the best images from the contest.

The Prize:

Grand Prize Winner: The winning image gets the coveted *Better Photography's* Collector's Edition 12 Pocket Guide set, which are comprehensive guides on how to make the best pictures in every genre, ranging from sports, wildlife to festivals and colours.

To see all the nominees images for this contest, visit www.betterphotography.in

Winner



➡ The Winding Vanishing Path

Manoj Bishwas, Araria

"From my vantage point, I could see this path stretching out endlessly in front of me. I composed the image such that the viewer's eyes are led from the girls in the foreground to the man in the far background."

Camera: Nikon D90

Lens: Nikkor AF-S DX 18-105mm f/3.5-5.6G ED VR

Aperture: f/7.1

Shutterspeed: 1/320sec

ISO: 200

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Guide No
64

16
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Sound
Prompt



LCD Monitor **DLM-007**

HDMI
Input & Output
with 3.5mm
& 4.5mm Input

For DSLR
& Video
Camera's

2 Angles
Adjustment
Shade Adapters
Standard
& Slim



LED Video Light **LED-D600**

Brightness
Adjustment

Battery
Power Test

16:9
Wide Screen



Infrared
Remote
to Control Functions
of Video Light



Flash Speedlite **DFL-1000T**

6 in
58
ISO 100

Lithium
Battery

TTL
For Canon
/ Nikon



Tripod CUM Monopod **DTR-495**

6 in
58
ISO 100

Honourable Mention

Strange Reality

Dipayan Bose, Kolkata

"I found this scene to be very funny, and I absolutely loved the juxtaposition between the pre-historic world with our modern times. The man stretching in front of the Tyrannosaurus Rex indifferently, just added to the absurdity of this frame."

Camera: Fujifilm FinePix
HS25EXR

Aperture: f/3.2

Shutterspeed: 1/3sec

ISO: 100



Tunnel Vision

Girish Jain, New Delhi

"I had previsualised this image before shooting, and I feel that it turned out even better. Since I did not have a tripod with me, I tucked my elbows in, held my breath and released the shutter. I wanted to juxtapose the stillness of the commuter with the speed of the train rushing past him."

Camera: Nikon D5100

Lens: Tamron 18-270mm

f/3.5-6.3 Di II VC PZD

Aperture: f/3.5

Shutterspeed: 1/20sec

ISO: 100

Honourable Mention



Honourable Mention

Running Along

Jasmeet Singh, Noida

"I wanted to photograph this girl as I saw her approach me.

First, I immediately crouched to the ground to reach her eye level. Just as she broke into a run, I photographed her in between the shadows for a unique portrait."

Camera: Canon EOS 5D

Mark III

Lens: Canon EF

24–105mm f/4L IS USM

Aperture: f/4

Shutterspeed: 1/1250sec

ISO: 100



Honourable Mention

Unique Link

Sagarneel Biswas, Bengaluru

"We were all strangers in the compartment, but these two ladies connected with each other over the fact that they were both travelling to Bengaluru to visit their children. I wanted to capture the companionship between the two as well as the strange way in which they seemed to be mirroring each other's actions."

Camera: Nikon D90

Lens: Tokina 11–16mm f/2.8

AT-X 116 Pro DX

Aperture: f/2.8

Shutterspeed: 1/25sec

ISO: 1600

Participate in the
'Your Pictures Contest' on
betterphotography.in/contests
to win a chance to be
featured in the magazine and
win exciting prizes!

⬇ Leap of Faith

Rupak Chatterjee, Howrah

"People at railway stations often hop from one train to the other, something that is illegal and is hazardous to life. From all the people I photographed, this frame stood out because of the contrast between the lady's attire to her surroundings."

Camera: Nikon D90

Lens: Nikkor AF-S DX
18-105mm f/3.5-5.6G
ED VR

Aperture: f/5.6

Shutterspeed: 1/200sec

ISO: 200



Honourable Mention

Ride with Style

Protim Bannerjee, Kolkata

"I was riding pillion on a scooter when I saw this man on his horse, stright out of a dramatic scene from a Bollywood movie. Since both of us were moving, I had the presence of mind to set a fast shutterspeed."

Camera: Canon

PowerShot SX40 HS

Aperture: f/4.5

Shutterspeed: 1/1000sec

ISO: 200



Honourable Mention

The Story Behind the Picture

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Photograph by:
Louis Arthur Ducos du Hauron

Image Source:
Wikimedia Commons

Creating Colour in Photography

During the mid-1800s, there was still a lot left to understand about the nature of light. Despite the limited technology of the time, French inventor Louis Arthur Ducos du Hauron came up with a colour photography process. He proposed that by photographing a scene thrice through red, blue and green filters and superimposing the camera negatives on a sheet, it would produce the scene in colour. He applied for a patent on this process and was granted one in 1869. Coincidentally, another French inventor Charles Cros independently published similar findings in a scientific journal, but du Hauron patented his processes first.

The image above is one of du Hauron's many experiments with this process. Here, he used three photograms to make a colour print of the flowers, stems and leaves. He placed the flowers, stems and leaves on a photographic paper and exposed it to light to create an image.

Unfortunately, du Hauron's process was never fully employed by photographers, because of how complicated it was to produce images. Thus, he did not make any profit from his findings. However, he was made a Chevalier of the French Legion of Honour (Ordre national de la Légion d'honneur) in 1912 and he received a pension from the Government.